

THE INHERITANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF MARRIAGE.

si la noblesse est vertu, elle se perd par tout ce qui n'est pas vertueux
elle n'est pas vertu, c'est peu de chose

LA BRUYERE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH
AND T. CADELL, LONDON.

MDCCCXXIV.

THE INHERITANCE.

CHAPTER I.

Quoique ces personnes n'aient point d'intérêt à ce qu'ils disent, il ne faut pas conclure de là absolument qu'ils ne mentent point.

PASCAL.

MR LYNDSAY was neither a weak nor a vain man, and he was too well acquainted with the nature of Miss Pratt, to attach much credit to any thing she said. He was aware, that, without absolutely speaking falsehood, she very rarely spoke truth—that, like many other people, she failed in repeating precisely what she heard, not so much from design as from confusion of brain, redundancy of fancy, imperfect organic construction, or, in short, some one or all of the causes, which seem to render simple repetition infinitely more difficult

than the most compound multiplication or addition. Much might be said upon this subject, but few readers are fond of digressions, especially when of a moral or didactic nature; the cause of Miss Pratt's observations must, therefore, be left to the construction of the world, which is seldom disposed to be over charitable in its conclusions.

Mr Lyndsay, indeed, was little in the habit of attending to her words, being possessed of that enviable power of mental transmigration, which placed him, when even within her grasp, quite beyond the influence of her power. He had, however, been struck with the mystical fragments of speech she had bestowed on him the preceding evening—he was aware how little dependence was to be placed upon them, but like the spider, her webs, even though wove out of her own intellectual resources, must still have something to cling to, and he resolved to lose no time in demolishing those cobwebs of her imagination. He, therefore, accosted her the following morning as, according to custom, she stood airing herself at the hall-door, and, without allowing her time to spread her wings and fly off in any of her discursive flights, he gravely begged to know the mean-

ing of the words she had addressed to him the evening before.

“ My words !” exclaimed she in some astonishment at being, for the first time in her life, asked for words.—“ My words ! what are you going to make of my words, my dear ?”

“ Not much ; but I confess I am rather curious to know in what way I am thought to have played my cards so well, as ——”

“ O ! I know where you are now—but if you want to take me in, Mr Edward, that won’t do—they say ‘ Day-light peeps through a small hole, and ‘ Love, like smoke, will not hide :’ so you needn’t trouble yourself to go about the bush with me—but you needn’t be afraid—mum’s the word—mum and budget, ha, ha, ha !—do you remember that ? It’s mum with you, it seems, and budget with a certain gay Colonel, for he’s off the field—aye ! you’ve really been very sly—but what will my Lord and his member say to it, think you ?”

“ It would be affectation in me to pretend that I do not understand your allusions, groundless and absurd as they are,” said Lyndsay ; “ but I do assure you, upon my word of honour, ——”

“ Bow wow, my dear, don’t tell me of your words of honour in love affairs ; I’ll rather trust to my own eyes and ears than to any of your words of honour. I declare you’re as bad as Anthony Whyte. I thought he would have raised the country at the report of his marriage with Lady Sophia Bellendean.—He certainly did pay her some attentions, but he never went the lengths that people said, though it wasn’t for want of good encouragement.”

“ Well, but as I have never presumed to pay attentions, and cannot boast of having received any encouragement, any report of that kind must have originated in some mistake, and would place both parties in an awkward predicament.”

“ Fiddle fiddle ! Really, my dear, when the lady doesn’t deny it, I don’t think it sets you very well to be so discomposed about it—aye, you may look, but I assure you it’s the case, that she as much as confessed it to me last night—now ——”

“ Confessed what ?” asked Mr Lyndsay in amazement.

“ Just that the Colonel had got his offset—Oh ! how I enjoy that !—and that a certain person,” with a bow, “ was her humble servant.”

“Impossible ! your ears have deceived you.”

“My ears deceive me, indeed ! what would they do that for ?—you surely don’t think I’m deaf ? and if I am, I’m sure I’m not blind ? You lovers seem always to think other people have lost their senses as well as yourselves, but it’s only love that’s blind, my dear.”

“Miss Pratt, I beg you will listen to me seriously, while I assure you, in the most solemn manner, that you are under a complete delusion.—For myself, I can only be honoured by such a supposition—but it is injurious, it is insulting to Miss St Clair, to have it imagined, that she has already bestowed her regards upon me, who am, in fact, still almost a stranger to her.”

Mr Lyndsay spoke with that air of truth and sincerity, that would have carried conviction to any other mind.

“As to that, it doesn’t take a lifetime to fall in love, and your sudden love is always the strongest—many a one has been over head and ears before you could say Jack Robinson. I really don’t see why you should take it so much to heart, when the lady puts up with it so quietly ; but more than that, I happened to hear

something last night—I may as well tell you what it was, if it was only to save you telling any more fibs to me about it. I happened to be taking a turn through the rooms last night, just to cool myself a little, after losing seven points, all owing to your good uncle's obstinacy—when I came to the—what-do-ye-call-it-room there—the door was open, and there I heard the Colonel say in a voice like any lion," raising hers in imitation, " You love that—that—(no matter what)—that Edward Lyndsay, says he, and you've deceived and bamboozled me.—I know that you've given your affections to him ; but he shall answer for it—and so he went on like any madman. I didn't hear so well what she said,—for, you know, she doesn't speak very loud ; but I heard her say, that she couldn't and wouldn't endure such insolence, and that he had no right to speak to her in that way. But just then Lord Rosville was calling me to go and play the game over again with him—and, at any rate, you know, I wouldn't have staid to listen."

" All that is nothing to the purpose," cried Mr Lyndsay, in some little emotion ; " at least the only purpose is to show how little depend-

ence you ought to place on any of your senses, since they must all have beguiled you in this matter. You will, therefore, act a prudent part for yourself, and a more delicate one towards Miss St Clair, if you refrain from making any such comments in future—be assured you will only render yourself highly ridiculous——”

“O! you needn’t be afraid; I’m not going to trouble my head about the matter,” returned Miss Pratt, reddening with anger; “but you’ll not easily persuade me that I’ve lost my senses, because I happen to have a little more penetration than my neighbours.” And away pattered the offended fair, rather confirmed than shaken in her preconceived notions on the subject.

Disbelieving, as he certainly did, the greater part of Miss Pratt’s communications, still it was not in nature that Mr Lyndsay should have felt altogether indifferent to them. Although not a person to yield his affections lightly, he certainly had been charmed with Miss St Clair’s beauty and grace—with the mingled vivacity and softness of her manners, and with the open *naïve* cast of her character. There was all to captivate a mind and taste such as his; but there was still something

wanting to render the charm complete. Firm in his own religious principles, he vainly sought in Gertrude for any corresponding sentiments. Gertrude was religious—what mind of any excellence is not ? but hers was the religion of poetry—of taste—of feeling—of impulse—of any and every thing but Christianity. He saw much of fine natural feeling—but in vain sought for any guiding principle of duty. Her mind seemed as a lovely, flowery, pathless waste, whose sweets exhaled in vain—all was graceful luxuriance—but all was transient and perishable in its loveliness. No plant of immortal growth grew there—no “ flowers worthy of Paradise.”

Mr Lyndsay had discernment to trace the leading features of his cousin's mind, even through the veil which was cast over it by Lord Rossville's tyranny and Mrs St Clair's artifice. He saw her ardent, enthusiastic, and susceptible—but rash, visionary, and unregulated—he feared she was in bad hands, even in her mother's ; but he dreaded still more lest Colonel Delmour should succeed in gaining her affections. He suspected his design ; and, from his previous knowledge of his habits and principles, was convinced that such an union

would be the wreck of Gertrude's peace and happiness.

Since that strange and mysterious adventure in the wood he had felt a still deeper interest in her, and he wished, if possible, to gain her friendship and confidence, that he might endeavour to save her from the snares with which she was beset. In short, Lyndsay's feelings towards her were compounded into one which could not have been easily defined—it was neither love nor friendship, yet partook of the nature of both—for it had somewhat of the excitement of the one, wit' the disinterestedness of the other.

The mutual embarrassment of the cousins was not lessened when they next met, and they seemed, by a sort of tacit agreement, to avoid each other, which Miss Pratt set down as a proof positive that there was a perfect understanding between them—but she was highly provoked that, with all her watching and spying, she never could detect stolen glances, or soft whispers, or *tête-à-tête* walks, or private meetings, or any of those various symptoms which so often enable single ladies to anticipate and settle a marriage before it

has been even thought of by the parties themselves.

Not daring, however, to give utterance to her thoughts where she was, and unable any longer to keep her discovery pent up within her own bosom, she availed herself of the opportunity of a *free cast*, as she called it, to make out her visit to Lady Millbank ; and there she accordingly betook herself with her budget—containing, in strict confidence, all the particulars of Colonel Delmour's refusal—his impertinent perseverance—his frightening Miss St Clair into hysterics by his violence, &c. &c. &c. Then came the history of Mr Lyndsay's acceptance—her own bright discoveries—a full and minute description of the pearls, well garnished with conjectures, as to how it would all end, when Mr Member came to poll, and found another elected and returned. Some of these dark sayings she had even dared to throw out to Lord Rossville; but his Lordship's thoughts were so engrossed by the realities of electioneering, that he had none to throw away upon it metaphorically.

Miss Pratt's departure was, as usual, a relief to the whole party ; but to none so much as to

Miss St Clair and Mr Lyndsay, who soon found themselves conversing together, if not with their former ease, with more than their former interest in each other. She could not be insensible to the quiet elegance of his manners, and the superiority of his conversation, but yet she failed to do him justice ; for, solely occupied with one engrossing object, she merely sought in any other where-withal to lighten the tedium of his absence. Two different pictures had been presented to her in the characters of the cousins—the one rich, varied, and brilliant in its colouring—the other correct and beautiful in its outline. The one attracting instant admiration—the other appreciated only by the careful and discriminating. Had perfection itself now been placed before her, it had failed to captivate the heart, over which a dazzled imagination had cast its deceitful hues. The idol of that heart had gained an absolute ascendancy over her affections, and on it she looked—not with the steady eye of sober truth, but with the fascinated gaze of spell-bound illusion.

CHAPTER II.

Many, like myself, are sick of this disease: that when they knew not how to write, yet cannot refrain from writing.

ERASMUS.

THE following letters were put into Gertrude's hand one morning. The first she opened was sealed with an ever-green leaf, motto, *Je ne change qu'en mourant*.

“ I am inexpressibly pained to think what an opinion my dearest cousin must have formed of me, from having allowed so much time to elapse, ere I commenced a correspondence, from which, believe me, I expect to derive the most unfeigned and heartfelt delight. But you, my dear friend, whose fate it has been to roam, ‘ and other realms to view,’ will, I am sure, make allowance for the apparent neglect and unkindness I have been guilty of, which, be assured, was very far from designed on my part. Indeed, scarce a day has elapsed since we parted, that I have not plan-

ned taking up my pen to address you, and to attempt to convey to you some idea, however faint, of all I have seen and felt since bidding adieu to Caledonia. But, alas ! so many of the vulgar cases of life obtrude themselves even here, in ‘ wilds unknown to public view,’ as have left me little leisure for the interchange of thought.

“ Were it not for these annoyances, and the want of a congenial soul to pour forth my feelings to, I could almost imagine myself in Paradise. *Apropos*, is a certain regiment still at B., and have you got acquainted with any of the officers yet ? You will, perhaps, be tempted to smile at that question ; but, I assure you, there is nothing at all in it. The Major and Bell (or Mrs Major Waddell, as she wishes to be called in future, as she think’s Bell too familiar an appellation for a married woman) are, I think, an uncommon happy attached pair—the only drawback to their happiness is the Major’s having been particularly bilious of late, which he ascribes to the heat of the weather, but expects to derive the greatest benefit from the waters of Harrowgate. For my part, I am sure many a ‘ longing lingering look’ I shall cast behind when we bid adieu to

the sylvan shores of Winander. I have attempted some views of it, which may serve to carry to you some idea of its beauties. One on a watch-paper, I think my most successful effort. The Major has rallied me a good deal as to who that is intended for—but positively that is all a joke, I do assure you. But it is time that I should now attempt to give you some account of my travels, though, as I promise myself the delight of showing you my journal when we meet, I shall omit the detail of our journey, and at once waft you to what I call Lake Land. But where shall I find language to express my admiration !

“ One thing I must not omit to mention, in order that you may be able to conceive some idea of the delight we experienced, and for which we were indebted to the Major’s politeness and gallantry. In order to surprise us, he proposed our taking a little quiet sail, as he termed it, on the lake. All was silence ;—when, upon a signal made, figure to yourself the astonishment and delight of Mrs Major and myself, when a grand flourish of French horns burst upon our ears—waking the echoes all round—the delightful harmony was repeated from every recess which echo haunted

on the borders of the lake. At first, indeed, the surprise was almost too much for Mrs Major, and she became a little hysterical, but she was soon recovered by the Major's tenderness and assurances of safety. Indeed, he is, without exception, the most exemplary and devoted husband I ever beheld ;—still I confess, (but that is *entre nous*,) that to me, the little taste he displays for the tune: ¹ nine would be a great drawback to my matrimonial felicity.

“ After having enjoyed this delightful concert, we bade a long *adieu* to the sylvan shores of Ulls Water, and proceeded to Keswick, or, as it is properly denominated, Derwent Water, which is about three miles long; its pure transparent bosom, studded with numberless wooded islands, and its sides, beautifully variegated with elegant mansions, snow-white cottages, taper spires, pleasant fields, adorned by the hand of cultivation, and towering groves, that seem as if impervious to the light of day. The celebrated fall of Lodore I shall not attempt to depict; but figure, if you can, a stupendous cataract, rushing headlong over enormous rocks and crags, which vainly seem to oppose themselves to its progress.

“ With regret, we tore ourselves from the cultivated beauties of Derwent, and taking a look, *en passant*, of the more secluded Grassmere and Rydall, we at length found ourselves on the shores of the magnificent Winander.

“ Picture to yourself, if it be possible, stupendous mountains rearing their cloud-capped heads in all the sublimity of horror, while an immense sheet of azure reflected the crimson and yellow rays of the setting sun as they floated o’er its motionless green bosom, on which was impressed the bright image of the surrounding woods and meadows, speckled with snowy cottages, and elegant villas ! I really felt as if inspired, so much was my enthusiasm kindled, and yet I fear my description will fail in conveying to you any idea of this never-to-be-forgotten scene. But I must now bid you adieu, which I do with the greatest reluctance. How thought flows upon me when I take up my pen !—how inconceivable to me the distaste which some people express for letter-writing !

“ *Scribbling*, as they contemptuously term it ! —How I pity such vulgar souls ! You, my dear

cousin, I am sure, are not one of them. I have scarcely left room for Mrs Major to add a P. S. Adieu ! your affectionate

“ LILLY.”

Mrs Waddell's postscript was as follows :

“ *MA CHÈRE COUSINE,*

“ OF course, you cannot expect that I, a married woman, can possibly have much leisure to devote to my female friends, with an adoring husband, who never stirs from my side, and to whom my every thought is due. But this much, in justice to myself, I think it proper to say, that I am the happiest of my sex, and that I find my Waddell every thing generous, kind, and brave !

“ ISABELLA WADDELL.”

The perusal of this letter was a severe tax upon Gertrude's patience, as it has doubtless been upon all who have read it—though tempted to laugh at it, she was, however, too generous to expose it to ridicule, and, therefore, hastened to commit the fair Lilly's lucubrations to the flames.

Poor Miss Lilly, like many other misses, had long aimed at the character of an elegant letter-

writer, and this epistle she looked upon as one of her happiest efforts ; she had studied it—she had meditated upon it—she had written a scrawl of it—she had consulted her journal upon it—in short, she had composed it. One may compose a sermon, or an essay, or an any thing, save a letter ; but when a letter is composed, all persons of taste must feel it is an odious composition. To speak with the pen is the art of letter-writing, and even a confused vulgar natural letter, flowing direct from the brain, or it may be from the heart, of one of uncultivated intellect, is more pleasing than the most studied and elaborate performance from the same source. But in letter-writing, as in conversation, many seem to study to make themselves tiresome, who, had they allowed their pens and their tongues to take their natural course, might have remained at least inoffensive. Yet many have lived to write good plain matter-of-fact letters, who have spent the early years of their life composing sentences, and rounding periods, and writing descriptions from the false ideas they entertain on this subject. But enough of condemnation on this, after all, venial transgression.

The other letter was in a different strain, as follows :—

“ MY DEAR COUSIN,

“ I feel encouraged to the liberty I am going to take, by the kindness you showed me when at Bellevue. Your good-will may now be the means of rendering me an essential service, and I would feel myself to blame, if false diffidence should hinder me from unbosoming myself to you. I was several times on the point of explaining myself to you, but thought I could more easily do it in writing, and now that I take up my pen, I wish I had rather spoken to you, when I had so many favourable opportunities. But why am I so wavering and foolish, when I ought with confidence to look to Him who has promised to direct the Christian's path, and who has promised that He will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in Him, and acknowledge Him in all their ways? I must now trust to your patience, while I tell my tale. A mutual attachment has subsisted between William Leslie and myself from our earliest years; but he is poor, and on that account, and that only, it is not sanctioned by my parents—

of course, you will believe that I never would enter into so sacred a connection without their consent. I love and reverence them too much, and, above all, I fear God, but fain would I hope that, had he a competency, their prejudices (for prejudices I must call them) would be overcome. William's choice was early pointed to the church, and his clerical education has for some time been completely finished, but hitherto all his efforts to procure a living have proved ineffectual. My father might assist him, but he is very lukewarm in the cause, as both my mother and he declare they cannot bear the idea of seeing me the wife of a poor minister. But I have learnt that poverty is a comparative thing, and that a competence to some is riches, while to others wealth seems little better than splendid want. It is true, riches will be denied me, but the greater blessings of peace and mutual affection may, by the blessing of God, be my happy lot. Even when called upon to endure hardship and privations, our souls will not be cast down, for with one heart and one faith, we will cheerfully bear the crosses of this life, looking forward to the inseparable and everlasting happiness of that which is to come.

“ ‘ Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than to sit in the joyless ease of indifference amidst heartless grandeur, or to drink the bitter cup of variance. Ah ! my dear cousin, God only can put gladness in the heart, and 'tis not by the world or the things of the world.—If, as I believe, religion be indeed the soul of happiness, then may I reasonably hope for that peace which the world cannot give, with one whom I have known and loved from my earliest years, and whose faith and practice are those of a follower of Jesus Christ.

“ ‘ This attachment is no phantom of a heated imagination. Our mutual love is now a principle—it cannot be extinguished, but it may be sacrificed to a still more sacred claim. I again repeat, I never will marry without the consent and blessing of my parents, but were my dear William provided for, I think their pride would yield to their stronger feeling of affection for me. Yet I almost blush to trouble you with my selfish concerns, though I know you will befriend me if you can. The church of Clearburn is in Lord Rossville's gift—the present incumbent is old and infirm, and an assistant and successor is to be

immediately appointed. I do not ask you to recommend William Leslie, because you ought not to recommend one to fill so sacred an office who is utterly unknown to you ; but if you would name him to Lord Rossville—if you would request of him to inquire into his character and qualifications of those who can judge of them, and then if you will support him with your influence, you will confer a heartfelt obligation on your faithful and affectionate cousin,

“ ANNE BLACK.”

CHAPTER III.

With a great understanding as a round orb that tumbles hither and thither, able to guess at the depth of the great sea.

Hindoo's Description of their God.

To feel and to act were with Gertrude commonly one and the same thing—reflection seldom was allowed to interpose its cooling influence, and scarcely had she finished reading the letter when she flew to Lord Rossville to ask (and she had no doubt to obtain) the boon solicited. She found the Earl alone in his study, surrounded with papers and parchments, and looking, if possible, even more than usually portentous.

“ I am come, my Lord, to ask—to beg a favour,”—she began, almost breathless from haste and emotion.

“ Miss St Clair, this is rather an interruption ; but be seated—be seated—and be composed.

You, and indeed all who have any claims upon my time, influence, or assistance, will ever find my ear open to the voice of proper solicitation—therefore, I again repeat, be composed, and allow this flow of spirits to subside, ere you commence.”

There is nothing less likely to promote its end, than a recommendation to be cool and composed, when one is all ardour and eagerness—but this was one of Lord Rossville’s methods of tormenting his victims. He was always composed himself, even when in anger—that is, he was always heavy, dull, and formal—and no subject could warm him so as to make him neglect the slow pompous formation of his sentences. His body was heavy—his nerves were tough—his blood was thick—he was a dull man—but, like many other men, he deceived himself, for he thought his dulness was self-command, and that he had the same merit in being composed as one whose perceptions are lively, whose blood flows rapidly, and whose ready imagination comprehends whole sentences such as his Lordship composed, ere they were half pronounced—one, in short, who thought and spoke with natural feeling and animation. Dif-

ferent, indeed, was Lord Rossville's composure from that of one who "hath learned to rule his own spirit," for he had a temper to rule but no spirit. He had a sluggish, obstinate, thick-headed, pragmatistical temper, incapable of hurrying him into the ebullitions of passion, 'tis true, but not the less troublesome and tormenting to those who opposed it. But this *desideratum*—for it was mere absence of animal heat that kept his Lordship cool—was more than compensated by what he deemed the masculine tone and nervous energy of his language, heightened as it was by gesticulation suited to the subject.

"Be composed," repeated he again, after a pause—his own composure becoming more and more heavy.

"O, it is nothing—I only feel a little afraid, lest you should think me too presuming when I ask—but I believe the petition itself will plead its own cause better than I can do;"—and she put her cousin's letter into his Lordship's hands, with very sanguine anticipations as to the result.

Lord Rossville perused it in silence; but his looks became darker at every line, and his head shook, or rather trembled, from beginning to end.

“A most wild, dangerous, and improper letter,” said he, when he finished it, vainly endeavouring to speak quicker—“I am pained to think that such a letter should have been addressed to you—that such a letter should have been presented by you to me,”—and his Lordship walked up and down the room in composed discomposure, while Gertrude remained aghast and motionless, at seeing her church in the air thus vanish like the baseless fabric of a vision. “Is it possible, Miss St Clair,”—asked he, his hand slowly rising—“is it possible that you had perused this letter?” pointing with his obstinate-looking fingers to the paper in question—“And is it possible that, having read, you can also sanction, and approve, and assist a young female in setting up her own judgment in opposition to the known will and intention of her parents, and to the opinion and approval of the world in general?”

“Although my cousin is so unfortunate as to differ from her parents on that subject,” said Gertrude, timidly—“she declares that she will not disobey them.”

“Not disobey them?—Good Heavens! Miss St Clair, what do you term disobedience?” The

dignity of this appeal was interrupted by a cough. “ *I have lived longer in the world, and have seen rather more of mankind than you have done, and I do not hesitate to say, that the principles contained in this letter, if acted upon by the bulk of mankind, (and it is only by generalizing principles that we can fairly bring them to the test,) must eventually prove highly destructive to the present order of things, inasmuch as they are totally subversive of all filial obedience and parental authority.*”

Gertrude was much at a loss to answer this tirade, which confounded, without in the smallest degree convincing her. Again, however, she tried to urge something in extenuation ; but it was, as Jeremy Taylor expresses it, treading on the corns of his Lordship’s mind to attack any of his opinions or prejudices ; and it was resented accordingly.

“ I own I am distressed—mortified—shocked—Miss St Clair, that a letter containing such sentiments should be advocated by you—sentiments fraught with so much mischief—principles destructive of the mutual relationship of parent and child—wild, fantastical, new-fangled notions,

setting at defiance all proper doctrines of religion, and only calculated to disturb, and finally abolish all orders of society—and yet it is such—such—I say I should consider myself as acting a most highly culpable part, were I to lend the smallest countenance or sanction to such measures ;”—and he walked up and down the room, his shoes creaking at every step.—“ Mr Black is a sensible well principled man, and obviously views the matter in the same light as I do, and as, indeed, all persons of a right way of thinking should do. A young female to presume to judge for herself, in opposition to the wishes of her parents—to the opinion of the world—to the general voice of mankind, and to seek to—to assume the mask of religion, in order to—to stifle the voice of duty, it is lamentable—it is deplorable—it is monstrous !—What was it but by such steps as these the established order of things in a neighbouring country were gradually undermined, and at length finally overthrown ?—It was by such steps as these” (knocking the letter slowly with his knuckles) “that the altar and the throne—religion and—and—and loyalty—and—and sound mora-

lity—all that were formerly held sacred, fell sacrifices to these very levelling principles ;”—and he threw the letter from him with all the energy of virtuous indignation.

Gertrude could scarcely refrain from smiling at the idea of Anne Black's marriage endangering church and state ; and something of that sort she ventured to express—

“ I beg pardon, my Lord,” said she ; “ but, even supposing my cousin's marriage were to take place, I cannot perceive any bad consequences that would result from it, unless to herself.”

“ You do not perceive—you do not perceive the pernicious effects of such an example operating on young females in the same sphere ?—operating, too, under my sanction and countenance—and—and—and—and *I* to become the patron of rebellious undutiful children !—the conniver at low and improper and clandestine connections ! Were such a precedent once established, where is it to end ? You yourself, I shall suppose, for the sake of illustrating my argument—you presuming upon my licence in this instance, deem yourself authorized to select—choose—and—and—and declare, that you will select and choose—

nay, that you *have* selected and choosen a—a partner for yourself, not only without my concurrence, but in direct opposition and contradiction to my will and authority. I ask, would not such behaviour on your part be—I do not scruple to say—monstrous?”

Gertrude was not prepared for this digression, but she saw by his Lordship’s bend, that an answer was expected, and in some trepidation she replied—

“ I hope it never will be my misfortune to differ from your Lordship on this subject. But if it should——” she stopped in much agitation.

“ You hope it will never be your misfortune to differ from me,”—repeated his Lordship, with a very dissatisfied look—“that is a style of language, Miss St Clair, I own, which does not satisfy me. On that subject I can allow no differences. No young lady, of a right way of thinking, ought or *can* have a different opinion on so important a point, from those whom it is her duty to reverence and obey.”

His Lordship paused, and seemed to be revolving some mighty matter in his mind, and

Gertrude, trembling to what this might lead, rose, and taking up her cousin's letter, was preparing to leave the room, when her uncle motioned with his hand for her to resume her seat ; then in a slow, solemn tone, spoke as follows :—

“ It certainly formed no part of my original plan with regard to you, that, at this early stage of your existence, you should have been made acquainted with the plans I had formed and laid down for your final disposal ; but, from what has passed, I am inclined to think, that, in deviating from my former purpose, I shall do wisely and well.”—He then proceeded in the same prolix manner to unfold to Gertrude the future web of her life, as spun and wove by his Lordship's own hand—or rather head.

Gertrude heard, without surprise, but not without emotion, that she was the destined wife of Mr Delmour, and, in that light, was considered by him, and by all the members of the family, and by all the freeholders in the county, and her heart glowed with resentment, at the thoughts of any one having thus dared to appropriate her without her own consent. Scarcely could she listen with patience, while Lord Ross-

ville detailed, in the most minute, yet guarded manner, his plans with regard to her future establishment, as if afraid of making her too happy, or raising her expectations too high. Thus, after having settled every thing regarding her marriage, with more than a lawyer's punctilio, he hastened to undo his own work in the same breath, by adding, that it was not his intention that the marriage should take place until she had attained the age of twenty-one, at soonest :—perhaps not even then, as he was no advocate for early alliances—that is, too early. “There was a time for all things, and that time must be regulated by circumstances ; but, in the meantime ——”

“In the meantime, my Lord,” cried Gertrude, with great emotion, “I must be allowed to disclaim any engagement with Mr Delvour.”

The Earl regarded her for some moments with the greatest astonishment, and seemed as if wholly bereft of the power of expressing the indignation which swelled in his bosom almost to suffocation, at this act of overt rebellion. At length he found words, though ideas were still wanting.

“What am I to understand from this most extraordinary speech, Miss St Clair?” interrogated he, with some difficulty.

Gertrude, in much emotion, but with the utmost gentleness of manner, repeated her words.

“Allowed to disclaim any engagement with Mr Delmour! a most extraordinary proposal at such a time!—at a time when so much is at stake—a most improper, nay, a most indelicate proposal in the present posture of affairs.”

His Lordship cleared his voice, hemmed, coughed, and proceeded:—“You cannot be ignorant, Miss St Clair, of the very important contest at present carrying on in this county—a contest which is of vital importance to the power and consequence of this family—and, I may add, of some interest to the country at large; as, in these times of anarchy and rebellion, when the Throne, and the Government, are assailed on all sides by factious and turbulent demagogues, it is of the utmost importance that our representation in Parliament be sound, loyal, and patriotic, if we expect that our religion and laws may be preserved, and handed down unimpaired to our posterity.”

Her assent seemed to be expected to this opening speech ; but Gertrude could make none.

The Earl went on—

“ You are probably not aware of the motives which have actuated me in thus developing my schemes and intentions to you, and to the world in general, at this period ; and, in doing so, I certainly have deviated from my original plan ; but we must all occasionally be regulated by circumstances ; and, I think, I have only to state to you, that the success of this most important political contest depends very considerably upon the understanding that Mr Delmour will eventually, and in all probability, one day become, through your instrumentality, the lawful possessor of the family-estates in this county, to grant your hearty concurrence in the proposed arrangement :—in one word, I could not with propriety offer Mr Delmour as the representative of this county, (he having little more than a nominal interest in it at present,)—unless—as the—as the, in all likelihood—the intended husband of the presumptive (observe, I say *presumptive*, not *apparent*) heiress of Rossville.”

His Lordship was so much pleased with the eloquence and brilliancy of his harangue, that, as he went on, he gradually spoke himself into good humour; and by the time it was ended, he had almost forgot the origin of his elocution. Gertrude remained silent, struggling with contending feelings. On the one hand was the fear of betraying her secret predilection for Colonel Delmour;—on the other, her scorn and detestation of every thing resembling duplicity and deceit. At length, her natural love of truth and candour prevailed, and mustering courage, she said—

“Much as it pains me to oppose you, my dear uncle, yet I should be still more unworthy your affection, were I to leave you in an error:—Forgive me”—she paused—her heart throbbed, and her colour rose—“forgive me, I will not deceive you. I cannot sanction the engagement you have formed for me—I never can be the wife of Mr Delmour.”

This was something so far beyond what Lord Rossville could have anticipated, that it was some time ere the fact could find admittance to his brain, choked up as it always was with his own

notions. While the process of conviction was carrying on, he, therefore, sat as if petrified. At length, the light began to penetrate the dim opaque of his understanding—but his Lordship had, as usual, recourse to other people's words, till he could muster his own forces.

“Never can be the wife of Mr Delmour!” repeated he in the tone of one who was not quite sure whether he were asleep or awake.—“Not sanction the engagement I have formed for you! What—what, in the name of Heaven, am I to understand from such language, Miss St Clair?”

The understanding seemed so perfectly obvious, that Gertrude felt much at a loss how to make it clearer. The question was again repeated.

“Excuse me, my Lord, but Mr Delmour is not the person I——but, indeed, I do not know how to express myself in a manner less likely to offend. I would say, that I wish to be left free, that I might be allowed to choose in so important——”

“You wish to be left free!—You wish to be allowed to choose in so important!——hem!—Really, Miss St Clair, I am too much astonished at the—the—the—the—the—the—the—what shall I

call it? the unwarrantable levity of such a proposal, to answer it as it ought. You wish to be left free to choose! and that in a point of such vast—such vital importance!—astonishing! Are you aware in what capacity it is that a suitable alliance is formed for you?—That it is not as simple Miss St Clair, and daughter of the Honourable Thomas St Clair—but as niece to the Earl of Rossville, and presumptive heiress to the title and estates thereof; with the exception of the Barony of Larchdale, which, by deed of entail of Alexander, first Earl of Rossville, devolves upon the heirs-male of the family; and, therefore, it is to consolidate these properties, that they may be again reunited in the persons of your mutual heir or heirs,—an arrangement which has Mr Delmour's entire approbation. I say, that, under these circumstances, there is not—there cannot—there must not, be a choice in the matter;—but, indeed, I am very much at a loss to know what to understand by such an expression. *I* certainly have not been accustomed to hear of young ladies of family, and fortune, and distinction, choosing for themselves in their matrimonial course. *I* can only say,

for my own part, I—I—had no choice.” Gertrude could scarcely restrain a smile at hearing Lord Rossville quote himself as a pattern to be followed, instead of a rock to be shunned ;—but such is the blindness of human nature, we are all but too apt to hold ourselves up as guides, when we ought to be satisfied to serve as beacons.

“ Allowed to choose !—I—I—and pray, Miss St Clair, supposing, for one moment, it was so—where, I ask—where would you—where *could* you find such another gentleman as Mr Delmour—a gentleman of birth and fashion—of fine address—of appearance—of accomplishments—possessing a first-rate understanding, of which he has already given undoubted proofs to the world, by having been appointed one of the Financial Committee, which, for so young a man, I consider as a very distinguished mark of pre-eminence ?—A man of fine person—of sound principles—of devoted loyalty—of high political consideration ; but who, notwithstanding all those advantages, yet submits himself, in this case, solely to my guidance and management ; I ask again, where could you find such another perfect gentleman ? ”

“ I acknowledge Mr Delmour’s good qualities,

my Lord—so far as I can pretend to judge of them upon so slight an acquaintance,” answered Gertrude hesitatingly ; “ but—pray forgive me, if I still repeat, that I must be allowed to consider myself as perfectly disengaged.”

“ Miss St Clair,” cried the Earl, now absolutely gasping—“ I can only say, that—that if you persist—if you presume to report yourself throughout the county as—as—as disengaged—I——” the pulse of life seemed to stand still, and “ nature made a pause, an awful pause, prophetic of its end.”—The clenched hand was slowly uplifted—then descended with a weight that shook the table.—“ I cannot answer for the consequences !” This is a threat which always forms a happy climax to an argument from its vagueness, and consequently its sublimity.

At that moment the party in question entered—his hands full of open letters, and with an air of bustle and business, not at all calculated to fascinate a romantic imagination such as Gertrude’s. He was beginning some rather formal and complimentary apology for his interruption, when she rose, and in some confusion stammered out a few words in reply, then bowing to the Earl, was re-

tiring, when Mr Delmour begged to know whether she had any friends in the western extremity of the county, as he was afraid he should be under the necessity of setting off for that quarter immediately, and should be much honoured by being the bearer of Miss St Clair's commands.

Gertrude disclaimed all interest in that part of the county, and scarcely able to express the common civilities of parting, hastily withdrew.

CHAPTER IV

—— My love's so true,
That I can neither hide it where it is,
Nor show it where it is not.

DRYDEN'S *All for Love*.

IN every generous mind there is a spring, which, if touched rightly, yields fine issues, but if struck by an unskilful hand, produces only discord. So it was with Gertrude—affection would have led her—reason might have guided—but mere authority could never control her. To one of an independent spirit, nothing, therefore, could be more irksome than the situation in which she was placed. She felt that, to be approved of, she must cease to act, cease to think, cease to feel, cease to love, but as directed by the will of her mother and uncle. A spirit such as hers could not at once be thus subdued; and no one who has anything noble in their nature can be sub-

dued but by their own will—their understanding acknowledging the fitness of their submission. The Christian, indeed, has his spirit subdued to yield obedience, contrary to his own ideas, to those who are placed over him by nature. But Gertrude's principles were not derived from this high and unerring standard; and though she gave a general assent to the doctrine that children owed obedience to their parents, yet it was with so many limitations, that the principle only wanted sufficient temptation to be set aside.

With regard to her uncle, his right to control her seemed very doubtful: and, indeed, the authority of uncles commonly comes in a very questionable shape, and is, perhaps, only to be considered as binding, when the uncle has received authority from a living parent, or has early and long supplied the place of a departed one. As for aunts, they are in general accustomed to dictate, but are seldom so unreasonable as to expect to be obeyed. Yet love and tenderness, almost maternal, have sometimes given them a power over a young and affectionate heart, which all the violence of improper authority never could have obtained. These would have subdued a

mind such as Gertrude's, but those gentle weapons were unknown, and unused either by Lord Rossville or Mrs St Clair. Authority with the one—artifice with the other, were the means used to gain their different purposes with one whom opposite methods would have rendered submissive as a child, and open as noon-day.

Gertrude's first impulse was to hasten to her mother, and relate to her all that passed betwixt Lord Rossville and her—she expected to encounter reproaches ; but Mrs St Clair seemed almost frantic at her daughter's disclosure, and absolutely shook with terror, while she listened to Gertrude's account of what had passed. But ere she had time to express her sentiments on the subject, a message was brought from the Earl, requesting her presence for half an hour in his study. It was easy to guess at the subject in hand, and Mrs St Clair, though in great agitation, instantly obeyed the summons. Gertrude waited with impatience for nearly an hour and a half, ere the conference was ended, and her mother appeared. When she did, she read vexation and discomfiture in her countenance. She was, however, too prudent to express her feelings, but contented herself with

saying, that she had found Lord Rossville in great displeasure against his niece, and had left him quite immovable as to the proposed alliance and declared engagement—and this was all Gertrude could draw from her mother. She, therefore, sat down to answer the unfortunate letter that had been the innocent cause of this premature *éclaircissement*, which she did by lamenting her present inability to aid her cousin in any shape, but concluding with the warmest assurances of regard and promises of assistance, should it ever be in her power to befriend her. She was then preparing to dress for dinner, when the following note was presented to her :

“ The Earl of Rossville presents compliments to Miss St Clair, and while matters remain in their present unpleasant position, and until some arrangement of an amicable nature has taken place, it is his wish and expectation that Miss St Clair should confine herself to her own apartment—*it may be presumed from indisposition.*

“ *Rossville Castle, 29th Aug. 18—.*”

His Lordship, when he perused this master-

piece of a billet, had fondly imagined it would speak daggers to the soul of his niece, and he piqued himself not a little at the *finesse* of punishing her in this exemplary manner, and at the same time keeping her transgression a secret from the rest of the family, whom he wished to remain in ignorance of this defiance of his power. Gertrude, of course, complied with this embargo, and left to her mother to give what name she pleased to her disorder. A week elapsed, and Gertrude still remained in defiance, but she bore her imprisonment with great heroism, and its languid hours were enlivened by a packet received through some unknown channel from Colonel Delmour. It affected to be merely a parcel of music; but it contained a letter full of all that love-letters are usually full of—hopes—fears—lamentations—vows—reproaches—raptures—despair. It may be supposed this did not tend to render Gertrude more compliant to her uncle's wishes; and his Lordship was beginning to feel much at a loss how to proceed, when all the combustible particles of his composition were roused into action, and he hastened to array himself in all his honours, and take the field in full force.

The report of his niece's engagement with Mr Lyndsay had, by the ingenuity of Miss Pratt, quickly circulated throughout the county, and had resounded and reverberated from all the corners of it, before the last echo reached the dull ear of Lord Rossville;—but when it did, it produced all the effect of a thunderbolt upon his senses.—Not that he could all at once give credit to such a monstrous supposition, but it was quite bad enough that the thing should be said, or for one instant believed. As soon as he recovered so far as to be able to ruminate, he therefore resolved upon his plan of proceeding; and, as the first step, summoned his niece to his presence. For some minutes he regarded her with a look which he vainly expected would cause her to sink to the ground—for the Earl thought of expression, as Glendower did of spirits, that he had only to call them, and they would come. After waiting in vain for the effects he had anticipated, his Lordship found he must have recourse to his voice—not that he was averse to using that, but having witnessed the magic influence of a Siddons and a Kean, he had no doubt but that he too could look

unutterable things ; and he had intended first to kill with the lightning of his eye, and then to revive with the gracious sound of his voice. All this he had intended ; but how often are the best intentions frustrated !

Gertrude was quite ignorant of these intentions, and in her uncle's persevering stare saw nothing but a stare, which being always a disagreeable thing, she sought to avoid by casting down her eyes. Still having somewhere read that women can see even with their eyes shut, Lord Rosville flattered himself that his piercing gaze would penetrate through the eyelids of his niece, and he waited a little longer in hopes of seeing her at his feet.

At length she raised her eyes, but it was to exclaim at seeing a hawk dart past the window in pursuit of a dove. The Earl now spoke.

“ Miss St Clair, look at me.”

Gertrude obeyed, and did look, but with an expression which seemed to say, and what then ?

“ Look at me, Miss St Clair, if, indeed, it is possible for you to meet my eye, after what has recently come to my knowledge—Miss St Clair,

this is neither a subject nor a time for trifling, and I will have neither equivocation nor prevarication—I ask you again—and I warn you to be cautious how and in what manner you frame your reply—I ask you again, are you willing to be restored to my favour and protection, upon the terms I proposed, namely, that you consider yourself as engaged, and as having been for some time past engaged, to Robert Burlington Delmour, Esquire, Member of Parliament, the heir-male of this family ; and do you consent that the nuptials be solemnized at such time as I shall deem proper ?”

“ My Lord, I grieve that I cannot obey you ; but I will not deceive you. Mr Delmour has my good wishes—my affections”——she stopped and coloured deeply ; then added, in a low voice, “ are not mine to bestow !”

Lord Rossville was struck dumb at this daring avowal, which seemed to mock the thunderbolt he held in his hand, ready to hurl when the proper moment came.

“ Miss St Clair,” gasped he at length, “ are you aware of the construction that may be put

upon such language?—that it amounts, in the ordinary language of the world, to an avowal or confession of a very particular, I may add, improper nature? Miss St Clair, what am I to understand from such a declaration?—a declaration which, in the eyes of the world, would be considered as tantamount to an express, and direct, and explicit declaration of a prior and illegal attachment, unsanctioned by me?”

Gertrude bowed her head, either to hide her blushes, or to testify her assent. The Earl resumed—

“Miss St Clair, my delicacy would have spared you this—to you humiliating—to me distressing avowal; but you have thrown aside the disguise which—which—which—but I must now inform you, that I am no stranger to this most improper, unaccountable, and unjustifiable transaction; and that, as the preliminary step towards gaining my forgiveness for this, I must say, unpardonable offence, I must insist upon a complete and total renunciation of all farther intercourse with the party implicated.”

“My Lord,” said Gertrude, trying to repress her tears, “I can only repeat what I have alrea-

dy 'said—I am sensible of your goodness—I grieve that I should have offended you ; but I never will renounce the right of choosing for myself—that choice is made—would it were one more pleasing to your Lordship.”

“ Miss St Clair, I will not hear another syllable,”—cried the Earl, with an energy unparalleled in the annals of his life and conversation—“ I here lay my positive injunctions upon you to refrain from speaking, thinking, or acting any farther in this most faulty and improper transaction, and I shall, at the same time, signify to the other party concerned, that, from this time, he likewise must cease to presume to consider you in any other light than that which the present relationship by blood warrants. I here positively annul and pronounce void whatsoever engagement, contract, deed, or instrument whatever, by which this clandestine, and, consequently, unlawful and improper correspondence has been——”

“ No, my Lord,” cried Gertrude, in her turn roused by such opprobrious epithets—“ you cannot annul the affections of the heart. I am not a slave to be thus bought and sold,” exclaimed she, giving way to her long suppressed tears.

“ Miss St Clair, such language—such sentiments—are no less unbecoming for you to utter, than they are improper for me to hear. I will listen to nothing more of the kind—but it is proper you should be made acquainted with what you have to expect from me should you persist in this obstinate, and infatuated, and destructive course in which you have begun. You are then to learn, that, in the event of your persisting in your headstrong and unaccountable refusal to fulfil the engagement I have contracted for you with the heir-male of this family, it is my firm resolution, and final determination, instantly to withdraw from you my countenance—alienate from you and your heirs every sixpence of property, heritable and personal, which it is in my power to dispose of; and farther, there is good reason to believe, that it will bear a question whether I am not at liberty, under the deed of Simon, second Earl of Rossville, to dispoise and bequeath the *whole* of the lands and estates according to my will and pleasure. At all events, the right of tying them up for an indefinite term of years is undoubted, and shall most unquestionably be put in force. You have, therefore, to choose betwixt

an annual income of L. 20,000, to which you are at present presumptive heiress, (that is eventually,) or to sink at once into comparative poverty, and insignificance, and obscurity."

"My choice is made, my Lord," said Gertrude, instantly calmed into the most perfect composure.

"Then, Miss St Clair, you know, and are fully aware of the consequences."

Gertrude only bent her head in silent acquiescence, and, rising to leave the room, the Earl rang the bell with rather more of energy than was his custom, and, as she retired, she heard him desire that Mr Lyndsay might attend him immediately.

CHAPTER V.

The man scarce lives who is not more credulous than he ought to be, and who does not upon many occasions give credit to tales which not only turn out to be perfectly false, but which a very moderate degree of reflection and attention might have taught him could not well be true.

ADAM SMITH.

THERE is nothing tends so much to brace the nerves, and keep up the tone of the spirits, as the sense of having been treated with injustice. For some time, therefore, Gertrude felt as though she had gained a triumph by the sacrifice she had made to her lover; she exulted in the thought of thus proving to him the sincerity and the devotedness of her affection, and delighted her fond and simple fancy, by imagining how much dearer she would be to him as the (for his sake) poor Gertrude St Clair, than she ever could have been as the heiress of Rossville. But the firstglow of enthusiasm over, she sighed as she thought, “ Yet how sweet would have been the pleasure of bestowing upon him all that I now see—these no-

ble woods—this far spreading domain, I had hoped to have made him master of! They tell me he is expensive, that is, he has a magnificent taste, and loves show and splendour, and pictures, and fine horses, and every thing that is beautiful. Ah! how happy I should have been in the means of gratifying him, and of making him so happy—oh! so happy, that he should have had nothing to wish for—yet all these he will sacrifice for me, for he has often declared my affection was all the world to him.—What signifies then the loss of wealth to those who can be rich in mutual love?” Thus communed Gertrude with herself, and at eighteen, who would not have done the same?

Meanwhile the Earl was somewhat at a loss what course to pursue with the other supposed offender, Mr Lyndsay. His Lordship, unknown to himself, had that sort of intuitive respect for his nephew, which weak minds, however against their grain, must always feel towards strong ones, but he still trusted to his powers of expression, and, therefore, arranged his aspect, as nearly as he could, into that cast with which he imagined Brutus had passed sentence on his sons. But looks were

as much thrown away upon Mr Lyndsay as they had been upon Gertrude ; that gentleman testified no sort of emotion whatever at beholding his Lordship's brows bent full upon him, and the Earl again found himself reduced to the vulgar method of explaining himself in words. He then entered upon a speech, which, for intricacy of design and uselessness of purpose, might have vied with the far-famed labyrinth of Crete. Poor Mr Lyndsay toiled after him in vain, quite unable even to conjecture where his Lordship was driving, and what was to be the issue of his tortuous harangue. At length the Earl emerged from the dim eclipse, in which, shorn of his beams, he had so long shed disastrous twilight, if not upon nations, at least upon individuals, and the truth burst upon Lyndsay's almost benighted senses. For a moment, a strange glow of delight came over his heart at hearing himself called upon to renounce all claim to the hand and affections of Miss St Clair, but it as quickly faded, as he thought of the difference of their views and sentiments, and he smiled in scorn at his own credulity, for having, for an instant, given ear to such a delusion. " It is impossible for me to

relinquish what I never possessed," said he in answer to the Earl's appeal; "nor can I even flatter myself it is in my power to obtain. This is some of Miss Pratt's idle rumours, which have found their way to your Lordship's ear; believe me, they are quite unworthy of a moment's consideration."

But it was in vain to hold this language to Lord Rossville; it was seldom an idea found entrance into his head, and when once there, it was no easy matter to dislodge it—it became, not the mere furniture of the head, to be turned or changed at will, but seemed actually to become a part of the head itself, which it required a sort of mental scalping or trepanning to remove. In vain, therefore, was Mr Lyndsay's denial—the Earl remained stedfast in his belief, and rejected the idea of Miss Pratt with the greatest contempt.—He "was perfectly informed of the whole from authority it was impossible to question." He then went over the same ground he had taken with Gertrude—the loss of his countenance—the breaking of the entail—the tying up of the property, &c. &c. "Were I, as you imagine, honoured with Miss St Clair's partiality," said

Lyndsay, “ I must frankly tell you, that all you have now said would not have the slightest influence upon me. I hope it never will have upon the man who is so fortunate as to gain her affections. Much as he may value your Lordship’s favour, and the Rossville estates, I trust he will never put either of them in competition with Miss St Clair.”

This was past answering. Lord Rossville took two or three turns through the room, before he could trust himself to reply, then spoke—

“ Mr Lyndsay, I can only impute this tergiversation of yours (to call it by no harsher name) to a very mistaken and destructive sense of honour ; but what will you say, Sir, when I inform you, that not many minutes have elapsed since, in this very apartment, and on this very spot, I received, from the lips of the young lady herself, the open and avowed acknowledgment of her—her—her—what shall I call it? her highly improper attachment to, and engagement with yourself?”

“ Impossible !” exclaimed Mr Lyndsay, his face flushing with a variety of contending emotions ;—“ she did not—she could not say so.”

Mr Lyndsay knew his uncle to be a weak, tiresome, conceited man—but he also knew him to be a man of perfect veracity—one who, at least, always intended to speak the truth. Such an unqualified assertion, therefore, as that he had just made, could not fail to be heard by him with some emotion, however mingled with incredulity.

Lord Rossville, in great displeasure that his word should be doubted, repeated his nephew's last words with more than usual pompous indignation, then added—"I should deem it derogatory to myself to insist farther upon this subject. I can only repeat, and that upon the honour of a peer, that I have received from Miss St Clair the avowal of her clandestine attachment to you, and farther heard her assert and maintain her right to make such a choice."

"Enough, my Lord," cried Mr Lyndsay ; " 'tis in vain to attempt to answer such assertions at present—but I shall endeavour to furnish you with some explanation of this mystery ere long." And he hastily withdrew, despairing of any elucidation from Lord Rossville. Yet how or where to find it he knew not, still less could he form any plausible conjecture as to the truth ; there was

none to whom he could apply, for there was no one on whose judgment or principles he could place any reliance. At one time he thought, was it possible Gertrude could be playing false, and using his name as a cover to some clandestine engagement—the stranger?—Colonel Delmour?—but the next minute he checked the idea as unworthy of her, of himself. Whatever her faults might be, duplicity certainly was not of the number—there was an air and expression of candour and openness in her countenance, manners, words, which placed her above the meanness of suspicion. At length he resolved to seek her himself, and try whether he could not penetrate this mystery.

Gertrude had remained standing at the window of one of the public rooms she had to pass through in leaving Lord Rossville's apartment—she had been gazing with a vague mingled feeling of pride and regret at the lovely scene that lay before her in all the glowing tints of autumn, when she was roused from her reverie by the entrance of Mr Lyndsay. He accosted her with an inquiry after her health, and then one of those awkward silences which every body has felt, en-

sued. At length, as she turned to quit the room, he spoke.—

“ Once, my dear cousin,” said he, “ you conferred upon me the privilege of a friend—that of speaking the truth to you.”

“ It is one you have hitherto made little use of,” replied she ; then deeply colouring as the thoughts of the midnight rencontre rushed to mind, she added, “ I have, perhaps, no right to expect, that Mr Lyndsay should do what circumstances must have rendered so disagreeable a task for him.”

“ You wrong yourself and me by such a supposition,” said he. “ However inexplicable some things may appear, a few words of truth, I am very sure, will set all to rights.”

“ No !” exclaimed Gertrude, in much agitation ; “ inexplicable I must still remain to you—ask me nothing—I cannot, indeed, I cannot answer any questions.”

“ Gertrude,” said Mr Lyndsay, with great emotion, “ it is essential to my happiness—perhaps to yours—that we should understand each other.” He paused, then, by a strong effort, proceeded, “ You will call it folly, presumption,

madness, when I tell you that Lord Rossville, under the influence of some unaccountable delusion, has called upon me to resign all pretensions, to your favour—to your love. He stopped, and Gertrude, overwhelmed with surprise and confusion, remained silent.

“Had I dared to aspire to it,” continued he in increasing agitation—“I know no earthly motive that would have induced me to relinquish my claims—but, Gertrude,” and he would have taken her hand, but, roused to self-possession, she saw there was only one course she could now pursue—she must throw herself upon the generosity of her cousin—she must confide to him the secret of her attachment to Colonel Delmour—noble and disinterested as he was, she knew him to be incapable of abusing her confidence, and with a mixture of embarrassment and simplicity, she disclosed to him the situation in which she stood.

Mr Lyndsay heard her with the deepest interest, while she lamented the misunderstanding that had occurred with her uncle, and avowed that her affections were no longer her own to bestow; but when, with faltering tongue, and downcast eyes,

she named Colonel Delmour as the object of her choice, a shade of anguish overcast his face.

"Then as I feared!" exclaimed he. "Ah! Gertrude, would I could have saved you from this!"

"Saved me!" repeated Gertrude, colouring deeply with shame and displeasure as she turned away.

"Forgive me, my dear cousin," cried he—"I did not mean to offend you—I spoke too abruptly; but I cannot retract what I have uttered. Did not you promise to hear, and to bear the truth from me?"

"I was ignorant then, that, under the name of truth, I was to be called upon to give ear to detraction, and detraction against the absent."

Lyndsay looked upon her more in sorrow than in anger, while he answered—"Yet, if you saw one in whom you were interested on the brink of a precipice, would any consideration withhold you from giving them warning of their danger? from saving them, if you possibly could? But do not injure me so far—do not suppose me so base as to have said to you what I have not said—what I will not again repeat to Colonel Delmour himself. I have warned him, that I would do all

in my power to save you from ever becoming his, if that is detraction——!”

“ Be it what it may,” cried Gertrude——“ I will hear no more——already I have heard too much ;” and her voice quivered with emotion——“ I will go to Lord Rossville——I will clear up this error——be the consequences to myself what they may ;” and rejecting Lyndsay’s effort to detain her, she flew to Lord Rossville, and, in all the excitement of wounded feeling, acknowledged Colonel Delmour as the object of her preference.

It was some time ere the Earl could open his eyes to this flood of new light ; but when he did, long and tiresome was the scene that ensued. This was worse and worse——to have chosen the wrong brother ;——’twas strange——’twas passing strange ; and a parallel was drawn betwixt the two brothers, that, in his Lordship’s estimation at least, might have rivalled that of Hamlet. In vain was he denounced ; even had she credited the aspersions cast upon him, they would have now come too late ; they might grieve, but they could not change her heart. At length, the whole concluded with her being discarded from her uncle’s presence and protection. Mrs St Clair was next

summoned, and a long consultation ensued. Her anger and dismay were at least equal to the Earl's, though caused by different views of the same subject. How to dispose of the offender was the next question. To permit her to bask in the light of his Lordship's countenance, even while under excommunication, would never do—yet to confine her to her apartment, or discard her utterly, would be making the matter public. And as he had no doubt he would ultimately prevail, he was anxious, he said, that the flame of rebellion should not be seen until he had fairly extinguished it. In this emergency, the only course Mrs St Clair could suggest was, that her daughter and she should pay a visit to her sisters. To this his Lordship at first objected; but, upon hearing that they lived in the most retired melancholy manner, and that it would be a perfect act of penance for Gertrude to reside there, he consented. Under pretence of change of air, therefore, for Miss St Clair's cold, it was settled that they should immediately depart—and the necessary arrangements having been made, for the sake of appearances, and, as he expressed it, to stifle any unpleasant surmises to which this hasty

removal might have given birth, they were escorted to the carriage by the Earl himself—he actually handed in Mrs St Clair, but only appeared to assist Gertrude—thus preserving the beautiful unity of his design to the last.

CHAPTER VI.

Il ne faut pas croire que la vie des Chrétiens soit une vie de tristesse, on ne quitte les plaisirs que pour d'autres plus grands.

PASCAL.

To the worldly mind there is always something depressing in the transition from grandeur to mediocrity. This Mrs St Clair and her daughter experienced upon entering the simple dwelling of the Miss Blacks. The one loved the pomps and the luxuries of high life, the other its elegancies and refinements, and both had lost their relish for the humbler sphere which they were now entering. They were received by the sisters with an affection and tenderness which seemed to flow from a better source than mere worldly politeness—there was an openness of character, a calm, sweet gentleness of manner, which could not fail to please ; but there was, at the same time, a difference of

tastes, principles, and pursuits betwixt them and their visitors, which no courtesy of manner, or cordiality of reception, could entirely do away. The Miss Blacks were no vain professors of that religion which all pretend to honour with their lips, while with many their heart is far from it—their time, their talents, their fortune, their hearts were devoted to its service, and, in devoting the heart to God, how various and comprehensive are the duties which it embraces ! Different portions, indeed, had been assigned them, but both were labourers in the same vineyard

Thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest :
They also serve who only stand and wait.

MILTON.

The word of God was the rule of their faith and practice—they believed, and they obeyed. Yet, impressed as they were themselves with the importance of those divine truths, they were aware, that it is not by the *mind*, but with the *heart*, that man believeth unto salvation ; and they sought rather to make Christianity loved and desired, than to prove it by reasoning and disputation. As the glories of the firmament are reflect-

ed in the placid bosom of some deep unruffled stream of the valley, so did Divine truth shine in them with a clear yet subdued light ; while that charity which “ vaunteth not itself, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil,” was visible in the deportment of its votaries, and shed an indescribable charm over the tone of their conversation. Without neglecting their own avocations, or sacrificing their own pursuits, they nevertheless endeavoured, by every means in their power, to render their house agreeable to their visitors, and to promote, if not mirth and revelry, at least cheerfulness and amusement. Still there was something in her sisters with which Mrs St Clair could not assimilate—she felt their faith and their practice a reproach to herself, and she turned with aversion from their excellence, as Lucifer did from the sunbeams, only because of their brightness. Thus it is with true Christian piety, which seldom fails to be an offence to some part of the world, which denounces, as zealots and fanatics, all who rise above their own low standard. It was otherwise with Gertrude ; though not sufficiently enlightened to be above imbibing prejudices, she was yet too liberal-minded and candid to

retain them ; and she had not lived many days with her aunts, ere she arrived at the conviction, that *all* religious people are not necessarily fools, hypocrites, or bigots. The unvarying mildness and gentleness of her aunts, their charity to all, their indulgence towards young people, could not fail to gain her affections ; and though their sentiments were totally different from hers, and what she deemed very *out of the way*, still the fruits were so fair, that she could not but apply to them Pope's often misapplied maxim,

They can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

But it was a species of virtue Gertrude felt no inclination to imitate ; all her ideas of virtue were those of imagination ; she loved to expiate in thought, on deeds o' romantic, sentimental excellence ; her money, and her tears, and her emotion, were always ready to bestow ; but when she herself was brought into contact with real genuine human wretchedness, she shrunk with horror and disgust from the encounter. The dirtiness of the houses, the coarseness of the people, the ugliness of the children, were all revolting to her fine-spun notions of the beauty of benevo-

lence, and she longed to discover some fair specimens of elegant woe, some interesting vestiges of human calamity, on whom to lavish the ardent sensibility of her warm and generous but unrenewed heart ;—in short, her religion was the religion of impulse and feeling, and, as has been finely said, “Virtue requires habit and resolution of mind, as well as delicacy of sentiment, and, unfortunately, the former qualities are sometimes wanting, where the latter is in the greatest perfection.” Alas ! it is not in this world that charity assumes the fair and graceful form, with which painting and sculpture, in all the richness of their imagination, have so often decked it !

Although the Miss Blacks lived, according to the worldly phrase, out of the world, they, nevertheless, had a society, which even Mrs St Clair and her daughter felt it no degradation to mix in. Their doors were open to all, for they practised hospitality towards all, though their chosen friends were those whose faith and practice most closely resembled their own.

William Leslie, the innocent cause of Gertrude's present disgrace, was a frequent visitor, and could not fail to make a favourable impres-

sion on her from his interesting appearance, and the modesty and propriety of his manners. From the delicacy of his features, he looked even younger than he was, and may be represented in the words of an ancient and somewhat quaint description, as “seeming much about twenty years of age, brown-haired, tall, of a sweet face, and of a most neat composure.” She felt as much interest in the success of that attachment, as the engrossing influence of her own would admit of her taking in any subject foreign to it. But to the disquiets of absence was now added a sort of restless anxiety, to receive renewed assurances of affection from her lover;—not that she *doubted* his fidelity, or for a moment believed it could be shaken by any vicissitude of fortune that might befall her; but still, as she knew Lord Rossville had communicated to him what had passed, it would have been gratifying to have been assured that his faith was unshaken. She saw by the papers that his regiment was still in England, perhaps then, he meant to come himself, and bear her through the storm, to which her attachment to him had exposed her—and day after day—hour after hour, Gertrude waited, till waiting degenerated in-

to watching, and watching turned into the sickness of hope deferred. Mrs St Clair read what was passing in her daughter's mind, and tried to take advantage of it, by prevailing on her to renounce the man who, at such a crisis, could leave her in doubt but for a single moment as to the nature of his sentiments; but 'tis long ere the young and generous heart can believe in any thing so monstrous as the deceit of the object beloved, and Gertrude, even while she felt the anxieties of doubt, yet rejected, almost with horror, the idea of his unworthiness. In vain did her aunts endeavour to lead her thoughts to better things, or even to direct her mind to other sources of occupation.

Gertrude, under the influence of a wayward and domineering passion, could listen only to its voice; and the voice of the charmer, charm it ever so wisely, fell unheeded on her ear; she felt almost provoked at their calmness and placidity, as contrasted with her own uneasy thoughts, and unsettled habits, and she secretly sighed at the insipid monotony of her life.

CHAPTER VII.

In hope a king doth go to war,
In hope a lover lives full long,
In hope a merchant sails full far,
In hope just men do suffer wrong ;
In hope the ploughman sows his seed,
Thus hope helps thousands at their need :
Then faint not heart, among the rest,
Whatever chance, hope thou the best.

RICHARD ALISON.

HITHERTO the weather had been fine, and though fine weather in any town, but more especially in a little dull, dirty, provincial one, never appears to less advantage, still it was a relief to Gertrude to saunter alone in her aunt's little garden, and sometimes to extend her rambles to the neighbouring fields ; but two days of incessant rain deprived her even of this resource, and she found herself shut up in the same apartment with her mother and her aunts, unable to take any interest, either in their occupations or con-

versation. Where people's hearts are in unison, a very small space, indeed, suffices for their bodies; but where there is no blending of tastes and pursuits, social intercourse necessarily becomes irksome and oppressive, and we sigh for even the joyless freedom of solitude. In the narrow dull streets of Barnford there was little to amuse or attract; but Gertrude sat at the window most part of the morning, gazing, she knew not at what. Perhaps there are few stronger proofs of aberration of intellect, than that of a person looking out of a window, where there is nothing to be seen; and at another time she would have smiled in scorn at the idea of ever being reduced to so pitiful a resource. Certainly the objects upon which she looked with vacant eye were not of the most attractive order. An old gentlewoman sat knitting—her hands at one side of her body, her head at the other, in the manner usually practised by expert knitters. This old gentlewoman then sat knitting a large thick-shaped white lamb's-wool stocking, with wires and quills, like those “upon the fretful porcupine,” stuck in her girdle, and which her well trained fingers, ever and anon, ex-

changed and adjusted in a manner which none but a knitter could comprehend or explain. It is a galling thing to those whose hands will not move a finger, without the intervention of the head, thus to behold other hands performing all the intricacies of heel and toe, apparently by their own free will and accord. There are few servants who do not require to be occasionally looked after ; but these trusty and vigilant members never appeared to relax in their labours, though the eyes of their mistress never were once directed towards them, but seemed to be in active observance of all that was to be seen beyond the sphere of her own dwelling. Much might be said upon this subject ; but, doubtless, my readers love a well knit story, as much as a well knit stocking ; and it would be like letting down a stitch to enter upon a long digression at present.

At the next house, a great washing was going on—maid-servants, with pinned up sleeves, crimson arms, and loose caps, came occasionally to the door to discharge tubs full of soap-suds, while a roaring infant was dandled at the window by a little dirty dog-eared-looking minx, with her hair *en papillote*. On the other side of the knit-

ting lady nothing was visible to the naked eye ; but the sound of an old cracked jingling spinnet was heard unceasingly practising Barbadoes' Bells and Nancy Dawson. Below was a shop, and over the half-door leant the shop-master, with a long sharp raw nose, looking as anxiously as ever did Sister Anne, to see if there was any body coming. —Now and then the street was enlivened with the clank of a pair of pattens ;—at another time, a spattered cow was driven reluctantly along, lowing most plaintively. There was also an occasional cart shaking the houses in its progress, as it rumbled over the rugged pavement. A hoarse shrieking ballad-singer made an attempt to collect an audience, by vociferating—

Bright Chanticleer proclaims the dawn,

And spangles deck the thorn ;

The lowing herds now quit the lawn ;

The lark springs from the corn.

Dogs, huntsmen, round the window throng,

Fleet Towler leads the cry ;

Arise, the burden of my song,

This day a stag must die.

With a hey, ho, chevy !

Hark forward, hark forward, tantivy !

Hark, hark, tantivy !

This day a stag must die. This day, &c.

But his only listeners were a boy going to school, and a servant girl, bound on a message which required dispatch. These were sounds of hopeless misery,—but the blowing of a horn, with what is it not fraught to the watching heart and listening ear? Gertrude strained her eyes, but a long-coach, covered with red cloaks and umbrellas, was just setting off—there was not even the hopes and fears of an arrival to agitate.

The day was beginning to close in—dinner had been ordered, and Gertrude, with a deep sigh, was turning from the window, when again the sound of wheels was heard—she turned—a carriage was in sight—it approached in the dubious straggling manner of one uncertain of its destination—the glasses were up, and dimmed with rain—but, oh! agitation unspeakable! as it stopped for a moment opposite the window, Gertrude recognised the well known Debnour crest! For some moments she saw—heard nothing—all was silent tumult in her mind, as she thought, “He is come!—even now he seeks me!”—She looked up—the carriage had moved on a few doors, but there it stood—she saw the hind wheels, but she could see no more, save that it seemed to be

causing a little bustle—heads were put out from the opposite windows, and two or three people came out of their dwellings, and crossed the street to it. Every instant seemed an age to Gertrude, and some minutes elapsed, when again it was set in motion. It turned—she saw the horses' heads—they were almost at the door—there was no longer doubt—it was soon reality—the carriage drew up—a loud knock at the door startled even the Miss Blacks—the bustle of an arrival was heard below—what was said Gertrude heard not—a mist was before her eyes—a rushing sound in her ears. The door was thrown open, and in an instant the whole illusion vanished, as if by the touch of some fell enchanter, for in pattered—Miss Pratt.

CHAPTER VIII.

How convenient it proves to be a rational animal, who knows how to find, or invent, a plausible pretext for whatever it has an inclination to do !

FRANKLIN.

“ MY dear Miss Black, this is really too much !—Now, don’t let me disturb you ; but what do you think ?—I’ve got into a fine scrape, thanks to my pretty madam of a maid.—Miss Mary, I hope you feel yourself getting stouter—this is sad weather for rheumatism, Mrs St Clair. Miss Gertrude, my dear, are you well enough ?—But, as I was saying, I really never was in such a situation in my life before.—I’ve been staying for the last week at old General Crabtree’s ; poor man ! the gout really does not improve his temper—and the house is small, and altogether, to tell you the truth, I was glad of an excuse to get away—so when our friend, Mr Delmour, who’s

there for a day or two on his political purposes, proposed sending in his carriage to get something done to the lamps, I thought I would just take the opportunity of coming in, having a little business of my own at this time—but what do you think? Upon coming to my own house, lo and behold it's hard and fast locked up, and that light-headed tawpee is off to a sick mother, or a brother from the sea, or some such sham, and I'm left to shift for myself—without a hole to put my head in. If she had had but the sense to have left my key, I could have made a shift——”

At that instant Miss Black's servant entered with a large key, bearing to be the key of Miss Pratt's house, which, she said, had been sent by Mrs Dunsmore, the grocer, with whom Babby Braidfoot had deposited it at her departure.

“That's my key, is it?” asked the owner, regarding it with a very bitter look; “and much the better I'll be of that, to be sure,” taking it with great reluctance. “I'll find cold quarters there, I think, for any body just come off a journey.”

Miss Black was too sincere to make speeches, or express pleasure she did not feel; but she took advantage of the first pause afforded by Miss

Pratt, to express her wish that she would remain with them, and to assure her of a hearty welcome to such accommodation as they had.

“ My dear Miss Black, this is really kind ! a friend in need is a friend indeed. Well I may say that !—But are you sure it’s not putting you to any inconvenience ? I know I may depend upon your telling me honestly. To be sure, nobody need mind me, for, I thank my stars, I am easily put up ; I’m not one of those who can only sleep in their own beds ; I can lie in any bed, if it’s not too hard, and is well made, and has plenty of pillows, and enough of blankets. Well, since you insist upon it, I’ll just take the liberty of having my bits of things brought out here ; they can easily be moved afterwards. Then, my dear,”—to the servant girl—“ will you just tell the coachman to take out my luggage ? He must get somebody to help him with the largest trunk ; and tell him to keep the small one with the right end upmost. And do you hear, my dear, will you take care in carrying up the handboxes ?—and there’s a large green bag, see that it’s well fastened at the mouth ;—and there’s a pair of stout walking shoes in one of the pockets, and my work-bag,

and a little brown paper parcel in the other—and there's a little basket in the corner, and that's all.—Well, this is really comfortable," drawing in her chair, "for a person just come off a journey;" taking off her shoes, and holding up her feet to the kindly influence of a blazing fire;—"and what's more, it is really kind," seizing Miss Mary's hands, and giving them a most emphatic squeeze; as much as to say—"And there is your reward." The servant now entered, to say every thing had been taken out; and the coachman begged to know "if there was any word." This Miss Pratt well knew was, in other words, craving a *douceur*, and she looked a little blank as she answered—"No word—he is just to take the carriage, as his master desired him, to Springwell, the coachmaker's, in the High Causeway, and show him what's to be done to the carriage; and he's just to leave it there, and make the best of his way home, with my compliments."—Then, as if communing with herself, "If I had been at home, I would have given him something this wet day—not that he's come so far as to need it—for it's but scrimp six miles—but, to be sure, the day's bad."

Miss Black here resolved these doubts, by giving orders for the coachman to have some refreshment.

“ Well, that is really very humane of you, my dear Miss Black ;—but I’ve my doubts whether it’s right to give other people’s servants any thing. Indeed, it’s a principle with me never to give them *money*,”—with a look, as much as to say, “ am I not right ?”

“ When people give trouble,” said Mrs St Clair, who was rather in a bad humour, and consequently very sensible in her remarks, “ they ought to give something besides.”

“ I beg your pardon, Mrs St Clair—I know many people who set their faces against allowing their servants to take money—*many*—they think it makes them greedy and rapacious, and I think so too. Indeed, I’m satisfied! it’s a wrong thing to give other people’s servants money ; but I think I ought to give my pretty light-headed Mrs Babby a month of the tolbooth as a reward for her behaviour.”

Dinner, which had been retarded by Miss Pratt’s arrival, was now announced. “ Bless me ! is it that time of day ?”—looking at her watch—

“ I declare it’s twenty minutes past five ;”—then forcing on her shoes—“ You must excuse my sitting down in my pelisse—for, I assure you, I little thought of dining in any body’s house but my own to-day.” Then, having taken her station at the table—“ Barley broth,”—peeping into the tureen—“ and a very good thing it is, when well made—and this is very nice—clear and strong—it’s a great favourite of mine.—Miss Mary, let me recommend the broth to you.—Miss St Clair, my dear, you don’t look as if you were hungry—that’s with not being out to-day.—I wish Anthony Whyte could see you just now ; for he says, an elegant female at dinner ought always to look as if she did not care whether she were eating or not—I really think you would please him there.”

“ I am sure, I seldom care whether I sit down to dinner or not,” said Mrs St Clair, with a sigh ; though, by-the-bye, she generally contrived to pick up the best of what was going.

“ My dear Mrs St Clair ! did you ever try to go without your dinner ?”

“ I dare say I have frequently.”

“ I beg your pardon, but really I think you must be mistaken there—take my word for it, no-

body that has tried it once will ever try it again—I speak from experience.—I once tried to go without my dinner; but, I can tell you, it was anything but agreeable; in short, it will not do, let people say as they will.—What nice-looking whittings—that's one of Mr Whyte's favourite dishes, nicely crisped with bread crumbs—and this is a Bellevue chuckie, I'm sure, fat and fair.—I declare it's a treat to me to sit down to such a dinner; for I'm perfectly sick of the sight of turtle soup and great fat venison.—I was really wearying to get to my own house for a little, if it was only to refresh myself with a drop plain barley-broth, and a bit boiled mutton; and what a pleasant thing for a few friends to meet this way, instead of these great hubbleshews of people one sits down with now, where there's no carrying on any thing like rational conversation.—Mrs St Clair, allow me to help you—Miss Mary, you're doing very little—Miss St Clair, my dear, take a little wine with me to cheer you this bad day.—Is this elder-flower wine, Miss Black?—Upon my word, it's very little inferior to Anthony Whyte's Frontinac—'Here's a health to them that's awa,'—with a significant look, and an attempt at the tune.

“ By-the-bye, what did you think when you saw Mr Delmour’s carriage stop ?—I doubt you were a little disappointed, eh ?”

Gertrude felt too miserable even to be moved by Miss Pratt’s ill-timed jests, and she remained pale, cold, and silent. To attempt to carry on anything resembling conversation in Miss Pratt’s company was impossible ; yet to endure her idle tattle for a whole evening was a sacrifice too great even for Miss Black’s patience and good breeding. It was in vain to have recourse to music, as she then fastened herself upon some one of the company, and carried on her colloquy in loud whispers, even more annoying to a nice-toned ear than open declamation. The only effectual mode of silencing her, then, was by reading aloud ; and although she highly disapproved of that manner of passing the time, and indeed remarked, what a wearing-out thing it was for the reader, and how much easier it was for all parties just to sit and chat, yet her objections were politely waived ; and Miss Mary, taking up a volume of Mackenzie, read the exquisitely beautiful story of La Roche—which served as a prelude to the solemn acts of devotion with which the evening closed.

CHAPTER IX.

I play the torturer by small and small,
To lengthen out the worst that must be spoken.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE sacred emotions which had been raised in Gertrude's soul had, while they lasted, shed their soothing influences on her heart; but when these ceased, she felt gladness only that the day was done, and that she should now be alone. Hurrying to her chamber, she took out the often perused letter of her lover—the only one she had ever received from him, but that one did it not stand for a thousand? There was all that the warmest, tenderest passion could dictate—there was every assurance of devoted, unchanging, everlasting attachment—and again, and again, she repeated, that to doubt was base—was dishonourable; but even while she repeated it, a vague secret doubt nevertheless lurked in her mind unknown

to herself. She was roused from her contemplation by a knock at her door ; and ere she had time to reply to the summons, Miss Pratt's head, in a night-cap, presented itself, with " May I come in?"—And taking it for granted, (as people generally do on those occasions,) she immediately entered.—" So, I guessed you would not be in a hurry to go to your bed—young people all like to sit up late—and, indeed, I'm not over fond of very early hours myself, so we'll just have a little chat," carefully extinguishing her candle.—" This is a nice snug little room, and I dare say you'll sleep as sound here as in your fine silk bed at Rossville—and, by-the-bye, how long is it since you left the Castle, and how came your uncle to part with you?"

Contrary to Miss Pratt's usual manner, she waited for an answer, and Gertrude replied, that they had left Rossville almost three weeks since, and there she stopped.

" And your uncle made no objections to your coming here? Of course, you could not have come, indeed, if he had opposed it ; and I suppose you're to make some stay in that case?"

Gertrude replied, that there was no time fixed

for their departure, and Miss Pratt for a moment looked as if a little baffled ; but, quickly recovering, she seized Gertrude's hand, and trying to look tender,—

“ My only reason for asking, my dear, is, that I really don't think you agree with this town—you don't look so well as when I saw you at Rossville—I wish all may be quite right,” patting the hand which was withdrawn from her with something of a look of displeasure. But the ice was now broke, and she plunged boldly in.—“ My only reason, indeed, for supposing there was any thing wrong is, that I've received a most extraordinary letter since I saw you from Lord Rossville—really a most impertinent letter,”—rummaging her pockets, and dragging out from each receptacle a vast collection of letters, notes, memoranda, &c. &c. amongst which she picked for some time, but to no purpose, for the missive in question ; then, with a look of alarm—“ Bless my heart ! I wish I mayn't have lost it !”—shaking herself most vehemently—“ It would really be an awkward thing, for, 'pon my word, it's a letter not fit to be seen by any body—what he could mean by writing such a letter to me of all people ! In

short, the substance of it was this, that Lord Rossville had heard, with inexpressible astonishment and pain, (or some such round-about phrase,) that Miss Pratt had presumed to circulate certain reports of a clandestine, and consequently improper nature, regarding certain juvenile members of his family, which reports—and so he went on, you know his style—but the short and the long of it was this, that I was not to say black or white about any of his juvenile members, and that I was to contradict every thing I had said, or might have said, or had heard, or might have inferred, previous to this period—but I can give you no idea of the way it was worded—but what do you think he can mean?”

Gertrude well knew what he meant; but, shocked at her uncle's absurdity, and at the publicity he was thus giving to her attachment, she remained silent.

“Such a fancy to take into his head, that I, of all people in the world, should have set any such reports agoing!—So far from that, I'm the very person that has put a stop to them, for I can't tell you all the nonsensical stories that were going about—One said you was positively engaged to

the Colonel—another had it, that you were to be married the 27th of next month to the member, and that cards for a grand ball to the county, on the 31st, were making out already in Mrs Delmour's name—a third had it, that the brothers were on the point of fighting a duel for you, when Lord Rossville got word of it, and threatened to disinherit them, and send you to a French nunnery; and, in the mean time, he has sent you here, as the next thing to it; but, in short, I can't tell you half the nonsense that was going, and every body came to me for the truth—but they made little of me, for my uniform answer was, that, to my *certain knowledge*, neither the one brother nor the other would ever be the husband of Miss St Clair—that it was quite a different person from either of them that would be her choice—so I leave you to judge if that was spreading reports! But I see how it is; Lord Rossville, honest man, has seen over his nose at last, and he's mad at my having had more penetration than himself; and, to be sure, it was a most extraordinary piece of blindness in him not to have seen how the land lay long ago.—But, bless my heart! there's twelve o'clock—I'm afraid

you're sitting up too late, my lamb—you're looking very white ; go to your bed as fast as you can—Good night, good night, my dear!"—And lighting her candle, she was hastening off, when Gertrude, roused into displeasure, said,—

" Ere you go, suffer me, once for all, Miss Pratt, to assure you, that you are in an error in every thing relating to me, and that Mr Lyndsay never——"

" Never can be any thing to you," interposed the incorrigible Pratt, with an incredulous smile. " Very well, that's enough.—I'm quite convinced, from what I saw, that Mr Lyndsay's nothing to you, no, no !"—in the tone and manner used by false nurses to wayward children, when assuring them of some monstrous falsehood.

Gertrude turned from her in silent indignation, as she repeated her good nights, and was softly closing the door, when, popping in her head again—

" O ! by-the-bye, I wish you joy of being quit of a certain disappointed lover—he's fairly off, his brother tells me, at last—a fair wind and a good voyage to him, and I wish him better luck another time—Now, go to sleep, my dear."

“Gone!” repeated Gertrude to herself, in an agony, as the door at length closed on her tormentor. “Gone! without one word. For him I am driven from my uncle’s house—for him I have renounced all, and he neglects and abandons me!” And she gave way to the long suppressed anguish of her heart, and for a while experienced all that agony of spirit of which her ardent and enthusiastic nature was susceptible. But hers was not a mind long to suffer despair to have dominion over her—it is not the first stroke of grief, however heavy it may fall, that can at once crush the native buoyancy of youthful spirits—it is the continuance of misery which renders its weight insupportable, and where there is even the possibility, there is generally the wish to escape from its pressure. So it was with Gertrude—the first burst of grief over—the dreadful surmise which she had at first hugged to her bosom with frantic eagerness, she now cast from her with scorn and indignation. That there was deceit somewhere she could not doubt—but that deceit was not with Colonel Delmour—it was impossible that he should have quitted England without writing to her;—but surrounded as she

was by his enemies, how could she suppose his letters would now be permitted to reach her? Lord Rossville and her mother both so violently opposed to him, both acting in concert, and carrying on a constant correspondence with each other, though the contents of the letters were kept a profound secret from her:—all these circumstances she revolved in her mind, till, from the first faint suspicions, they gradually grew into proofs strong as holy writ. Her heart felt lightened by the discovery, and in the morning she took her place at the breakfast-table, with her nerves braced, and her eyes kept from tears, by the determination of rising superior to all the petty artifices that might be practised against her. Breakfast was but just over, when the return of the renegade Babby Braidfoot was formally announced to Miss Pratt, who immediately left the room for the purpose, as she said, of giving her a good hearing. *

* A good hearing in Scotland signifies the very reverse of what it expresses, and means neither more nor less than a downright scold.

CHAPTER X.

On met tout en oeuvre pour assortir les fortunes, on ne se met point en peine d'assortir les coeurs.

MASSILLON.

Our morals are corrupted and vitiated by our admiration of wealth.

CICERO.

WHILE this was carrying on, Mrs Black was announced, and presently entered, her blooming good-humoured face, expressive of even more than usual satisfaction, which, after the usual greetings had been exchanged, she hastened to communicate. The sum and substance of Mrs Black's intelligence was this, that her daughter, Lilly, having gone with the Major and Mrs Waddell to Harrowgate, had there made a conquest of a wealthy young London merchant, who had made his proposals, and that the whole party were now on their way down, and were to be at Bellevue the following day to dinner. Due congratula-

tions, of course, ensued, but Gertrude was too much surprised at this sudden revolution in the fair Lilly's affections, to be able to express hers in proper form. Mrs Black, however, was so well satisfied herself, that she took it for granted, every body else was the same; and she proceeded to enlarge upon the merits of this most excellent match, as she termed it. Mr Larkins was in good business, (it was an old established house, Larkins, Barlow, and Company,) of a most respectable family, and himself, an uncommon clever, genteel, handsome young man; indeed, had it been otherwise, the Major and Bell never would have countenanced any thing of the kind; she only wished (with a deep sigh) that some other folks were in the way of making as prudent and feasible a connection. This was evidently in allusion to her daughter, Anne; and Miss Black mildly replied, that it was, indeed, agreeable when parents and children were agreed upon so important a point, but that it was not surprising they should often view it in very different lights. "Parents," said she, "complain, that children are apt to be led away by romantic notions, which can lead only to disappointment, while children

lament, that parents look only to wealth and worldly aggrandizement in their estimate of happiness, and I fear there is often but too much justice in the reproaches of both parties."

"I think it is the duty of all parents to prevent their children from marrying, only to become beggars," said Mrs Black.

"I think so too," answered her sister; "but I fear worldly-minded parents too often confound what they consider poverty with beggary."

"There is not much to draw between them, I think," said Mrs Black.

"Undoubtedly, beggary implies poverty, but what, by many, is called poverty, does not necessarily include beggary," replied Miss Black.

"Wealth itself may, and often has proved insufficient to save the vain, the selfish, and the extravagant from beggary; but Christian principles, virtuous habits, and an independent mind, will ever preserve even the poor from becoming burdensome to others."

"It's very easy speaking," said Mrs Black with some pique; "but every body knows, that, in these times, it's not little that supports a family; what with taxes and servants' wages, and children's

schooling and outfit in the world—it's a very serious matter become."

"All these things are, or ought to be, proportioned to the means afforded," replied Miss Black. "If the poor *will* live like the rich, and educate their children in the same style, beggary, or, at least, its sister, dependance, must ensue; but if they would live according to what they *have*, and not according to what they think they *ought* to have, poverty would not be the hideous bugbear it is so often represented."

"In my opinion," said Mrs St Clair, who thought she had an interest in the question; "in my opinion, poverty is the most intolerable evil in life, and has, I am convinced, the most demoralizing influence upon society."

"Poverty, like beauty, is, perhaps, not easily defined," said Miss Black; "and, I believe, the ideas people entertain on the subject are even more various than the discrepancy of taste that prevails as to personal charms; some would call it poverty, not to be able to keep two or three carriages, and a score of idle horses and servants."

"You know *that's* nonsense," said Mrs Black.

“ That’s an extreme case,” said Mrs St Clair.

“ Then where is the boundary that separates wealth and poverty ?” asked Miss Black. “ What is the precise meaning of a poor marriage ?”

Both ladies hesitated, but Mrs Black took the lead.—“ I certainly would think any daughter of mine had made a poor hand of herself, who could not afford to go as well dressed, and give as good and full dinners, as she has been accustomed to in her father’s house.”

Mrs St Clair could not repress a smile in scorn at the vulgar simplicity of her sister-in-law’s notions.

“ But suppose,” said Miss Black, “ (as we cannot have every thing,) that she is willing to wear a less costly gown, and have fewer dishes on her table than you, my dear sister, in your liberality, bestow upon your hospitable board ; if, as an equivalent, she is rich in the virtuous principles, intellectual endowments, and rational affection of him she has chosen as the companion of her earthly pilgrimage ?”

“ All that,” said Mrs St Clair, sounds very fine, my dear Elizabeth, and very logical to those who have not seen so much of the world as I have

done ; but be assured, a young woman of any refinement must be completely wretched, under the cares and drudgery, and privations, attendant upon a poor marriage. For example, there are certain luxuries, as you call them in this country, though, in France, they are mere necessities, matters of course, such as a carriage, wax-lights, French wines, a suitable establishment, handsome mirrors, society that is not company,—these things, and many more of the same sort, I certainly consider as absolute parts of that exquisitely combined essence we call happiness, at least to a person of delicate taste and refined habits.”

“ Such airs !” thought Mrs Black to herself. “ French wines, and wax-candles, every day, indeed ! Set her up ! I wonder what entitles her to such extravagance !”

“ Poverty has really been gently handled by both of you,” said Miss Black, laughing—“ I don’t suppose there ever was so fair a picture drawn of the squalid phantom before. You, my dear sister,” to Mrs Black—“ merely represent him as not having his cheeks stuffed out like a plump Dutch Burgomaster ; and you, Sarah, quarrel with him, for not having all the airs and

graces of an epicurean *petit-maitre*. Now, although I am too old to fancy that love—wedded love, at least—can live upon smiles and flowers, yet I do believe there is a species of attachment, which can exist without being stall-fed on the one hand, or tricked out in foreign luxuries on the other, and which could be happy, even in mediocrity.”

“ I never mentioned such a word as stall-fed,” said Mrs Black, a little ruffled—“ but I’m astonished, Elizabeth, that anybody come to your time of life, and who has kept a house so long, can think that people can live upon deaf-nuts now-a-days.”

“ The rich are, at least, free from the vulgar sordid cares of life,” said Mrs St Clair, bitterly,—“ which I repeat, to a mind of any refinement must be wretchedness.”

“ I wonder what she calls the vulgar sordid cares of life ?” thought Mrs Black.

“ To a mind of any feeling and refinement,” said Miss Black, “ I believe it would be far greater wretchedness to be linked to a vulgar sordid spirit, even had its master all that rank and riches can bestow, than it would be to endure privations with a mind congenial to its own—to

such a mind, there are cares which love only can sweeten."

"There can be little peace where there's not plenty," said Mrs Black ;—"but it's lucky every body's not of your way of thinking, or the country would soon be swarming with beggars, and we would be perfectly ate up."

Gertrude could not quite repress a smile, as she looked at Mrs Black's jolly person, and thought how groundless such an apprehension was on her part.

"There is little cause for alarm on that account," said her sister-in-law—"as your sentiments are much more popular than mine ; besides, I am not so unreasonable as to insist upon every body's marrying for love, whether they will or not. Many people, I believe, are quite incapable of forming a disinterested attachment, or having even a preference for one person more than another, except, according to worldly motives—a fine house—fine clothes—a carriage—precedence ; in short, some one of the thousand paltry baits which catch the vulgar mind ; to talk to such of the superiority of virtue and talent, would be as absurd as to insist upon the blind seeing, or the

deaf hearing : on the other hand, there are those, who, with taste, feeling, and refinement, have neither pride, vanity, nor ambition ; it is surely, therefore, the height of tyranny, to insist upon *their* placing their happiness in the indulgence of those things—upon *their* sacrificing all their purser, better feelings, to gratify the pride and prejudices of others.”

“ I really wonder to hear a woman of your sense speak such nonsense,” said Mrs Black, affecting to look cool in the face of a very high complexion.

“ Such sentiments can only tend to the subversion of all proper principle,” said Mrs St Clair, with solemnity—“ to the encouragement of low and depending alliances, contracted under the high-sounding names of disinterested attachment, congenial souls, intellectual superiority, and such fulsome phrases, as can only lead to the annihilation of all ranks and degrees of society. A weak romantic girl has only to find a congenial soul in her dancing-master, or to prove her disinterested attachment to her father’s footman, and, according to your doctrine, she has done nobly—she has proved herself superior to the vulgar allurements

of pride, ambition, and what not—O ! it is an admirable, a beautiful theory !” and Mrs St Clair trembled with virtuous indignation.

“ Pardon me, Sarah, you cannot disapprove of such connections more than I do ; but a *poor* marriage, and a *low* one, I consider as very different things, although I suspect many people are but too apt to confound them. Undoubtedly, a gentlewoman who has the feelings and ideas of one, will only unite herself with a gentleman,—with one who has had the education, and who has the manners and habits of one, who exercises the profession, and is accustomed to the society of such ; for there can be no solid happiness in a union where all the advantages of birth and education are renounced on one side, and I am far, very far from upholding those who violate the established orders of society, who fly in the face of parental duty, and sacrifice all that is dear and respectable in feeling to the indulgence of their own selfish passion. On the contrary, I will venture to affirm, that connections formed without the consent of parents are so far from being productive of domestic

happiness, that they are generally marked with disappointment, misfortune, and sorrow."

"There's really no knowing what you would be at," said Mrs Black, with an air of perplexity—for Mrs Black, like many other people, carried her prejudices all on one side, and nothing puzzled her so much as when she met in argument with a person of an unbiassed judgment and a liberal mind; and so indissolubly united in her imagination were the ideas of a poor being a low marriage, on the one hand, and a rich being a genteel one on the other, that to separate them was utterly impracticable. The coarsest booby, with twenty thousand a-year and a title, would have struck Mrs Black with awe, or at least respect;—while the most elegant mind or person, destitute of the trappings of wealth or the insignia of grandeur, would have been wholly overlooked.

The entrance of Miss Matt soon turned the tide of the conversation—for she had learned from her "pretty Miss Babby," that there was not a morsel of coal or a crumb of meat in the house; and the coals you bought on the street were always bad, and there was no getting meat—every body knew that—unless on a market day;

—and, in short, it ended in Miss Pratt consenting to remain Miss Black's guest for another day, until her mansion should be duly prepared and stocked for her reception. In the mean time, she set forth, as she pretended, on her business, which, in fact, was that of interfering in that of every other person.

Mrs Black also departed; but as she was really good-natured in the main, she consented that her daughter Anne should spend the evening with her aunts, even at the risk of meeting William Leslie, who, along with some other of their friends, was expected.

CHAPTER XI.

Even as some sick men will take no medicine, unless some pleasant thing be put amongst their potions, although perhaps it be somewhat hurtful—yet the physician suffereth them to have it. So, because many will not hearken to serious and grave documents, except they be mingled with some fable or jest, therefore reason willeth us to doe the like.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

Speak nobly of religion, but let it be well timed ; for people avoid those who are perpetually preaching.

GANGANELLI'S *Letters*.

MISS PRATT'S visit would have been reckoned rather ill-timed by most people, as the Miss Blacks had invited some of their own friends to spend the evening with them, and the pleasure, if not the harmony, of the party bid fair to be disconcerted by her audacious tattle. But they were too tolerant and enduring to allow any considerations of that kind to stand in the way of their hospitality, though well aware of Miss Pratt's enmity against all whose creed and practice in matters of religion differed from her own ;

for Miss Pratt, like too many people, deemed her own the only proper standard of religious and moral excellence. She had her bed of iron for the soul, as Procrustes had for the body, with this difference, that she was far more lenient towards those who fell short of her measure, than of such as went beyond it.

Not that Miss Pratt carried her hostility so far as to decline having any intercourse with, or receiving any favours from these wild people, as she called them. On the contrary, she was always happy at an opportunity of meeting with such of them as she thought she could turn to any account, by taking her beggars off her hands, and she was always ready to make use of their time, money, and old clothes, to save her own. However, she took every occasion of letting it be known, that she had met with a great want of charity amongst those very people who make such a phrase about it, as they had refused to recommend, to the Destitute Society, Anthony Whyte's nurse, a decent, respectable woman, and Anthony Whyte a subscriber too ! But Miss Pratt was not bitter in her resentment ; and, upon hearing of the party which was expected, she expressed much satisfaction, and resolved to be uncommonly pleasant.

and at the same time serious too in her conversation, out of compliment to the Miss Blacks. Mrs St Clair liked company of any kind better than none, and to Gertrude, in the present state of her mind, all company and all scenes were alike. Hers was a state of passive endurance, not of actual enjoyment.—She was roused, however, by a visit from Mr Delmour and Mr Lyndsay. The latter held out his hand to her, with a look which seemed to say, “Have you forgiven me?” but colouring deeply, she turned away, and bestowed her whole attention upon his companion. Mr Delmour was secretly flattered by the air of profound attention with which (for the first time) she listened to every word he uttered, in the hope that something would lead to the subject uppermost in her thoughts, but farthest from her tongue; but nothing was said which had the slightest reference to Colonel Delmour, and her countenance betrayed her extreme vexation when the gentlemen rose to take leave. Upon hearing that they were both to be in attendance at a county meeting in town, which, of course, was to conclude with a dinner, Miss Black invited them to return in the evening, which they promised to do, and departed. It was evident, from Mr Delmour’s man-

ner, he knew nothing of what had passed ; but Gertrude had paid no attention to his manner, nor once thought of the very flattering construction he might put upon hers. As for Lyndsay, she scarcely noticed him at all—it only struck her after he was gone, that he was more than usually silent, and that his features wore a more pensive cast than common—but what was Mr Lyndsay to her ? and she listened with weariness and chagrin to the eulogium her aunts pronounced upon him.

Evening came ; and Miss Pratt, in a grave gown, bottle-green gloves, a severe turban, and a determined look of strong good sense, seemed to say, “ I’ll show you what a rational, respectable, wise-like character I am—I’ll confound you all, or I’m mistaken !” And she took her ground, as usual, as though she had been mistress of the mansion, and prepared to do all its honours accordingly.

Even in the Christian world there are great varieties—there are narrow minds as well as great minds—there are those who pin their faith upon the sleeve of some favourite preacher—others who seem to think salvation confined within the four walls of the particular church in which they

happen to sit ! But, as has been well said by the liberal-minded Wesley, “ How little does God regard men’s opinions !—what a multitude of wrong opinions are embraced by all the members of the Church of Rome—yet how highly favoured have many of them been !” *

And who has not their imperfections ?—who has not their besetting sin ?—their thorn in the flesh ? Even the best of Christians ; but piety to God, and the desire to benefit their fellow-creatures, is, and must be, the universal characteristic of the Christian of every church. The few friends assembled were certainly favourable specimens of what is termed the religious world—they were persons of agreeable manners, enlarged minds, and cultivated tastes ; the conversation was animated and interesting, in spite of Miss Pratt’s attempts to turn it into her own low channel, by relating the bits of gossip she had picked up in her morning perambulations, and which he thought to set off with some trite moral reflection. There was occasionally music from both gentlemen and ladies, which even Gertrude’s fastidious ear acknowledged to be fine in its way—for all knew what they

* Wesley’s Journal.

were saying or doing ; and there were no mawkish attempts at singing in an unknown tongue—there was no “poetry strangled by music,”—but “airs married to immortal verse,”

“Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.”

Ah ! who can hear the divine strains of a Handel, or the dear familiar songs of their native land, without feeling their souls elevated, or their hearts melted into love and tenderness ! Both were sung by different members of the company with much taste and feeling—but by none so much as by Mary Black, who, with seraphic sweetness, sang the inspired strain,

“How beautiful are the feet of these
Who bring the glad tidings of faith to men !”

“Every thing that Miss Black sings must be charming,” said Mr Delmour, with his *faded* gallantry ; “but if I may be permitted to offer an opinion, I should say, there is perhaps something rather too sectarian in sacred music, unless upon solemn occasions ; and I should be apprehensive that, were a taste for it to become general, it would prove destructive to every other species of composition—I may add, even to the fine arts in

general." Mr Delmour had a genteel horror at every thing he deemed approaching to what he thought Methodism—though a most zealous supporter of the church in so far—but no farther than it was connected with the state.

" Pardon me," said Miss Mary Black ; " but it appears to me that such apprehensions are groundless—the blessing of God, and the applause of posterity, seem to have perpetuated the fame of genius devoted to religious subjects more than the fame of those men who abused their noble gifts, by dedicating them solely to the service of their fellow-creatures."

" As instance ?" asked Mr Delmour, with an incredulous smile.

" True," said Mr Lyndsay—" it certainly has been so in many instances. Milton is undoubtedly the first poet of our country, and what was his theme ? He sang in noble strain of Him

‘ Unspeakable, who sit’st above these Heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works.’

‘ The greatest poet of Germany was Klopstock, and his subject the Great Messiah ; and of his deathless work it has been well observed, that ‘ when

music shall attain among us the highest powers of her art, whose words will she select to utter but those of Klopstock ?' The noblest bards of Italy were Dante and Tasso—Metastasio has had recourse to sacred subjects for his operas—Racine for his *Athalie*—Young, in his *Night Thoughts*, sung to him, who—

‘ From solid darkness struck that spark, the sun,’
invoking him to ‘ strike wisdom from his soul.’
The amiable and elegant Cowper casts all his laurels at the feet of his Saviour :

‘ I cast them at thy feet—my only plea
Is, what it was,—dependence upon thee.’”

“ You are really eloquent, Lyndsay,” said Mr Delmour with an ironical smile ;—“ but, in the fervour of your zeal, you have entirely overlooked those immortal, though profane authors, whose works are still more popular than any of those you have quoted,—Shakespeare, for instance.”

“ Shakespeare is, perhaps, the most favourable exception,” replied Mr Lyndsay ; “ he is, indeed, a poet of Nature’s own creating ; but the dross of his compositions is daily draining off in improved editions, and even in theatrical representation,

while the pure parts of his morality are not thought unworthy of being quoted from evangelical pulpits, and one day, I doubt not, it will be with him as with some of the poets I have just mentioned. They have written some things unworthy of their pens ; but their fame is perpetuated only as the authors of what is pure and good. The profane and licentious works of Lord B. will live only in the minds of the profane and impure, and will soon be classed amongst other worthless dross, while all that is fine in his works will be culled by the lovers of virtue, as the bee gathers honey from even the noxious plant, and leaves the poison to perish with the stalk,—so shall it be with Burns—so shall it be with Moore. The same argument applies to music. Handel derives his fame from his Oratorios, and the Creation of Haydn will immortalize his name—a performance in which the genius of the composer has struck a chord, which calls forth any genius which happens to be in the breast of the audience. To mention the great painters who have dedicated a portion of their time and talents to sacred subjects would be to enumerate the whole catalogue ; and I have already to apologize for hav-

ing so long monopolized this subject," said he, turning to a clergyman who stood near him, and whose looks testified the interest he took in the debate—"when there are those present who could have done much more justice to the cause." Beneath the simple, meek, unpretending exterior of Mr Z — few would, indeed, have guessed at the profundity of his learning, the extent and variety of his acquirements, and the ardour of his zeal in the cause of Christianity. Firm in his principles, yet soft in his manners—warm in feeling, yet mild and gentle in temper—able to talk, yet willing to listen—his mind was full of information, while his manners were those of one seeking instruction.

Thus appealed to, Mr Z — was about to reply, when Miss Pratt interposed with—"What do you say to these two great writers, Fielding and Smollet? I suspect there's none of these you have mentioned will ever be half so popular as Tom Jones and Humphry Clinker."

"The works of Fielding and Smollet—even the more highly gifted ones of Voltaire and Rousseau, are passing away, like noxious exhalations," said Mr Z — mildly. "If the principles of the age"

in which we live are equally defective with the former—at least, a better taste prevails, and grossness, profanity, and licentiousness, are no longer the standards to which the young look with admiration. Impure writers are now chiefly known to impure readers—but where virtue and genius unite, their powers are known to all. O! what injury to the human mind is derived from the perusal of the works of writers, whose corrupt imaginations have given the impulse to their licentious pens! Of such it may truly be said, though highly esteemed amongst men, yet are they abominations in the sight of God. Yet, alas! how few look to that guiding principle, which alone ought to direct the pen!—how few consider, that, to do good, ‘a work is not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapour of wine—nor to be attained by the invocation of Memory and her siren daughters—but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases.’” *

* Milton.

There was so much Christian meekness, even in Mr Z——'s fervour, that it was impossible not to be touched with his manner, even where the matter failed to carry conviction along with it. Mr Delmour affected to bow with deference to the opinions of a clergyman—the conversation took another turn—music succeeded, till at last the party broke up.—Gertrude had been interested in the discussion, but soon it passed from her mind, as “ a lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice.”

CHAPTER XII.

Let us proceed from celestial things to terrestrial.

CICERO.

Jests are, as it were, sawce, wherebye we are recreated, that we may eat with more appetite ; but as that were an absurd banquet in which there were few dishes of meat and much variety of sawces, and that an unpleasant one where there were no sawce at all, even so that life were spent idly where nothing were but mirth and jollity, and again that tedious and uncomfortable where no pleasure or mirth were to be expected.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

AGAIN Gertrude felt the bitterness of disappointment. She had watched and hung upon every syllable that Mr Delmour had uttered—but he made no mention of his brother, and with all the timidity of love, she felt it impossible to breathe the name on which her destiny was suspended.

The following morning saw Miss Pratt depart with all her packages, and many reiterated professions and promises, and scarcely had she left the house when Mr Adam Ramsay arrived. As uncle Adam's visits, like those of angels, were

few and far between, his nieces welcomed him according to the rarity of the occurrence ; and as he appeared to be in unusual good humour, he received their attentions with tolerable civility. But even his civility was always of a rough nature—something akin to the embrace of a man-trap, or the gentle influence of a shower-bath—while his kindness commonly showed itself in some such untoward shape, as was more grievous to be borne than aught that malice could invent.

“ What’s this come ower ye, my dear ?” said he, addressing Gertrude, with as much affection as it was in his nature to testify. “ You’re white, an’ you’re dull, an’ you’re no like the same creature you was ;” and he gazed upon her with more of interest than of good breeding. His remarks, of course, called the colour into Gertrude’s cheeks, and Miss Black, seeing her at a loss to reply, hastened to relieve her, by throwing the blame, where, in this climate, it is always thrown—upon the weather. But uncle Adam spurned the idea of the weather having the slightest influence on the health and spirits of any thing but potatoes and leeches.

“ The weather !” repeated he, contemptuous-

ly. “ You’ll no tell me that a shower o’ rain can bleach a young creature’s checks white, or put the life out o’ her een ;—but I’ll tell you what it is—it’s the synagogin’—the tabernaclin’—the psalmin’ that goes on in this hoose, that’s enough to break the spirits o’ ony young creature.”

“ My dear uncle——” said Miss Black, with a smile.

“ Now I’m no gawin’ to enter into ony o’ your religious controversies,” cried Mr Ramsay, holding up his hand, and turning away his head ; “ but I’ll tell you what I’ll do, my dear,” patting Gertrade on the shoulder, “ I shall tak’ you to see a sight that’ll divert you, and drive away thae wild notions you’ve been getting your head stuffed wi’ :—to gang an’ mak’ a bairn like that miserable wi’ your nonsense !” with a fresh burst of indignation at his nieces—then again softening down—“ Put on your bannet, my dear, an’ come wi’ me—As I cam up the street the noo, I saw ane o’ thae caravan things standing in the market-place, wi’ a picktur o’ a giant an’ a dwarf hingin’ on the outside, and tho’ I wadna cross the floor to see aw the giants and dwarfs that ere were born, yet I ken young folk like ploys o’ that kind—so put

on your things, and I shall treat you to the show ;” and he put his hand into his pocket, and tumbled his money to and fro, as much as to say, “ I have plenty of shillings and sixpences, and, therefore, you need have no scruples of delicacy, as to taking advantage of my offer.”

The cold drops stood upon Mrs St Clair’s brow, at the thoughts of her elegant distinguished daughter, the future Countess of Rossville, mingling with the *canaille* of a country town, in a caravan, to gaze upon a giant and a dwarf! What would Lord Rossville say? There was distraction in the thought—yet she dreaded to offend uncle Adam by a hasty rejection of his plan. “ We are all, I am sure, sensible of the kindness that prompts your offer, my dear uncle,” said she, in her most conciliating manner: “ but I am afraid the remedy you propose would only tend to aggravate the evil—My daughter’s complaint is headache, occasioned solely by the confinement to which she has been subjected for some days, and the close air of a caravan would be extremely prejudicial—If I could have given her an airing—but having no carriage of my own!” and the sentence died away in a sort of

indistinct ejaculation about the misery of being dependant upon others for those accommodations.

“ You might let her speak for hersel’,” said Mr Ramsay with some asperity ; “ say what you would like best, my dear ;” and Gertrude, gladly availing herself of the excuse suggested, declared that fresh air would be her best restorative.

Mr Ramsay pondered a while, still turning his money, like his thoughts, to and fro. At length, after an apparently severe struggle, he spoke—

“ Weel, since that’s the case, instead o’ takin’ you to the show, I’ve no objections to hire a chaise and treat you to a ride—I shall step to the Blue Boar mysel’ and order ane up, so you may be puttin’ on your mantle, an’ there will be room for three, so you can settle among yoursels which o’ you is to gang.”

Mrs St Clair had been caught in a snare of her own setting—she had thrown out a hint about a carriage, in hopes that her uncle’s partiality for her daughter would have made him grasp at it at once, and that he would have been induced to set up one for her sole use and accommodation.—This would have been a very convenient arrangement for her mother, who could not get the command of Lord Rossville’s quite so often as she wished.

Her blood almost froze at the idea of a *ride* in a hackney-chaise—but it required more courage than she could master to oppose this second project, and, in silent despair, she saw uncle Adam snatch up his little old rusty hat and set off. Her only hope was, that the Blue Boar equipages would be all engaged, but that was soon at an end; for, in a short time, uncle Adam was descried returning on foot, followed by a high-crowned, jangling, tottering chaise, with a lame brown horse and a blind grey one, urged along by a ragamuffin driver, seated on a wooden bar, almost touching the windows. Such was uncle Adam's triumphal car,—and not Boadicea, when dragged captive at the wheels of her conqueror, experienced bitterer feelings than did Mrs St Clair, when she found herself compelled to take her place in this vehicle. True, she might have refused, but at the certainty of affronting uncle Adam, who could stand any thing but *airs*, and to affront seventy thousand pounds was a serious matter, especially in the present posture of affairs. The iron steps were thrown down with a mighty clang as far as they could reach, and having, with some difficulty, contrived to mount, she seated herself with great disgust and ill-humour, vainly

attempting to disengage herself from the straw with which it was carpeted, and which, at once, seized upon her silk stockings and lace flounces.

“ So much for the beauties of poverty,” whispered she, in no very sweet accent, to her daughter, as she took her place beside her. “ For Heaven’s sake, pull your bonnet more over your face, that you may not be recognized,”—and she carefully adjusted her own veil in triple folds over every feature. Mr Ramsay followed, and the driver waited for orders.

“ Whar wad ye like to gang to, my dear ?” asked he of Gertrude ; “ but it’s aw the same, ae road’s just like anither—tak’ the best and the driest,” to the driver.

But Gertrude, who had got her cue from her mother, interposed, saying—

“ If it is not disagreeable to you, my dear uncle, I should like to see your own Bloom-Park.”

“ Bloom-Park !” repeated Mr Ramsay in evident discomposure ; “ what wud tak’ ye to Bloom-Park ?—What’s put that in your head ?—I’m sure there’s naething to be seen there.”

“ Pardon me,” said Mrs St Clair, seeing her daughter would not urge the matter ; “ but that

beautiful specimen you gave Gertrude of your green-house has made her absolutely pine to visit your flowers."

Mr Ramsay's brow looked rather thundery; but, after demurring a little with himself, he desired the driver, in a voice of repressed anger, to take them to Bloom-Park. The patched cracked windows were drawn up—the driver mounted his seat—the horses were with some difficulty set in motion, and off they went, the chaise rocking and jingling, as though it would never reach its destination. To speak, or, at least, to hear, was out of the question, so the party proceeded on their pleasure excursion in profound silence, till, at the end of an hour and a half of incessant jolting and clattering, they found themselves at the gate of Bloom-Park. It was a fine, showy, modern place, with a large handsome house standing in the middle of an extensive, but somewhat new-looking, park, sprinkled with a few large old trees, and many young ones still in their cages. There was nothing picturesque or beautiful in the scenery; but there was much comfort, even luxury, denoted in the appearance of the gay, airy, spacious mansion, with its French windows,

verandas, porticos, and conservatory—in the smooth gravel walks, diverging in all directions—in the well-stocked fish-pond—in the stupendous brick garden-walls, with flues and chimney tops—in the extensive range of hot-houses, and, in short, all the appliances of affluence and enjoyment. Nothing could look more unlike the place than the owner. That Mr. Adam Ramsay should have become the proprietor of such a place was the wonder of some, and the ridicule of others ;—but the simple fact was, that upon this very estate the race (if not the family) of Ramsays had been born, and bred, and lived, certainly time *immemorial*, for it was in the humble rank of cottars. Here also Lizzie Lundie had first seen the light ; and here it was that uncle Adam's youngest and happiest days had been spent—for here they had “ ran about the braes, and pue'd the gowans fine ;” and “ though seas between them braid had rolled” for many an intervening day, and the grave had long closed over the object of his early affection, he still cherished the fond remembrance of auld lang syne. Before his return from India, he had heard that the estate of Broomyknows—now

changed into Bloom-Park—was in the market ; he became the purchaser, partly as a means of investing money, which he was rather at a loss how to dispose of, and partly from a secret penchant towards it, which, however, he would have scorned to acknowledge, and, perhaps, of which he was scarcely aware. Great was his surprise and indignation, however, when he did visit it, at beholding the ravages refinement and luxury had committed upon the primitive charms of Broomyknows—for, pilgrims as we are in a stranger land, how do our souls cling with fond tenacity to the simple memorials of transient, childish, perished joys !—But not a trace of his old haunts remained. The banks, and braces, and knows, had been all levelled with the dust—the little wimpling burn, fringed with saughs and hazels, where many a summer's day Lizzie and he used to “paddie” for minnows, was gone to swell some mighty stream. The Mavis-hill, a rude uninclosed eminence, covered with wild roses, and brambles, and blue bells, and sloes, where many a mavis and lintie's nest had been found, was now a potatoe field—not a whin scented the air, —and how often beneath India's burning sun had

uncle Adam sighed for a breeze from the whinny braes of his native land ! But, worst of all, on the very spot where once stood his grandfather's and his father's old green slimy cabins, with their fungous roofs, and their kail-yards and their middens—now rose an elegantly ornamented dog-kennel. *That* he instantly ordered to be demolished—indeed, it was said, he had remained upon the ground to see it done—and from that time he had never looked near the place till now, that he had come in compliance with Gertrude's wish, but very contrary to his own inclination.

Mrs St Clair was in ecstasies with all she saw—the interior of the mansion was perfection—the suite of apartments elegant—the furniture superb—in short, there was not a superlative she did not exhaust in attempts to express her admiration. But the thought that was uppermost in her mind she would not have ventured to utter so readily, viz. that if the worst should happen, and Lord Rossville should discard his niece, there was another string to her bow at Bloom-Park ; and she could almost have been satisfied to have renounced the ambitious prospects of the one for the luxurious certainty of the other. But

Mrs St Clair's raptures were completely thrown away upon uncle Adam, who cared not a rush what she or any one else thought of his property, and he followed rather than led the way through his own house, with a kind of dogged impatience, as if his only wish were to be out of it. This was not lessened, when the news of his appearance having spread, he found himself beset by a host of retainers, indigenuous to an extensive and neglected property. Grieves, gardeners, gamekeepers, tenants at will, and tenants on lease, all came thronging with wants to be supplied, and grievances to be redressed, and all looking with evil eyes on the visitors, in the fear of their becoming residents, and so ending their respective reigns; while the housekeeper, as she went swimming on before in all the conscious dignity of undisturbed power, detailed at great length all her own doings and sayings, with the various means used by her for the preservation of the furniture, and the annihilation of mice, moths, "clocks, and beasts of every description."

"Things are no just in the order I could wish," said the old curmudgeon of a gardener, as he unwillingly led the way to the kitchen-garden;

“ and there’s an awfu’ heat here ; you’d better no come in for fear o’ cauld, leddies,” as he produced the key of the extensive range of hot-houses ; and, with a sour face, found himself compelled to fill a large basket with the choicest of fruits, which he had more profitable ways of disposing of.

At length Mr Ramsay’s patience was exhausted, and they set off loaded with the most exquisite fruits and flowers, which, as he possessed not the organs of either taste or smell for ought beyond haggis and southernwood, he looked upon merely as sort of artificial excrescences which grew about large houses.

“ Noo,” said he, addressing Gertrude, as he seated himself in the chaise, “ I dinna begrudge this, if it’s to do you ony gude—and, as I tell’t you before, gang whan you like, and tak what you like—but dinna ask me to gang wi’ you ; for I’m ower auld noo to be plagued and deeced about drains, and fences, and young plantations, out o’ doors ; and pipes, and plaster, and aw the rest o’t, within—and the gardener he canna get the apples keepit—and the gamekeeper, he canna keep the pheesants preserved—an’ I’m sure I dinna care though there was nae an apple or a

pheasant in the kingdom, if they wud only let me alane."

"It unquestionably would be a great advantage to the place, as well as a relief to you, to have the house occupied, with some one who could take a judicious management"—began Mrs St Clair; but a bitter look from her uncle made her perceive she was treading on dangerous ground, and she allowed the noise of the carriage to drown the rest of the sentence.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lord of love ! what law is this,
That me thou makest thus tormented be ?

SPENSER.

THEY were returning by a different road from that which they had taken in going, and had not proceeded far when they were suddenly hailed by a pedestrian from the side of the road, and Major Waddell was immediately recognized. The chaise was stopped, and mutual salutations having been exchanged, was about to proceed, when the Major entered so vehement a remonstrance against their passing his door, without inquiring in person after his dear Isabella, that even uncle Adam's flinty nature was forced to yield. Indeed, as they were within a few yards of the gate, it was scarcely possible for even uncle Adam to hold out ; and, accordingly, preceded by the Major, the chaise turned up the romantic wind-

ing approach which conducted to the mansion. Black Caesar, bowing and grinning, hastened to receive them, and usher them into the presence of massa's lady, who, in all her bridal finery, sat in the attitude of being prepared to receive her marriage guests. Having welcomed Mrs and Miss St Clair with a tone and manner of encouraging familiarity—"And my uncle, too!—this is really kind.—I assure you I'm quite flattered, as I know how seldom you pay visits to any body."

Mr Ramsay had entered with the heroic determination of not opening his lips during his stay—he therefore allowed that to pass with a sort of scornful growl; but Mrs St Clair, in her softest manner, took care to let her know, that the visit was neither a premeditated nor a complimentary one, and that she owed it entirely to their accidental rencontre with the Major.

"Bless me, Major!" exclaimed the lady in a tone of alarm, "is it possible that you have been walking?—And the roads are quite wet!—Why did you not tell me you were going out, and I would have ordered the carriage for you, and have gone with you, although I believe it is the etiquette for a married lady to be at home for some

time;”—then observing a spot of mud on his boot, “And you have got your feet quite wet;—for Heaven’s sake, Major, do go and change your boots directly!—I see they are quite wet!”

The Major looked delighted at this proof of conjugal tenderness, but protested that his feet were quite dry, holding up a foot in appeal to the company.

“Now, how can you say so, Major, when I see they are quite damp?—Do, I entreat you, put them off—it makes me perfectly wretched to think of your sitting with wet feet—you know you have plenty of boots.—I made him get a dozen pairs when we were at York, that I might be quite sure of his always having dry feet.—Do, my love, let Cæsar help you off with these for any sake!—for my sake, Major,—I ask it as a personal favour.”

This was irresistible—the Major prepared to take the suspected feet out of company with a sort of vague mixed feeling floating in his brain, which, if it had been put into words, would have been thus rendered:—

“What a happy dog am I, to be so tenderly beloved by such a charming girl, and yet what a

confounded deal of trouble it is to be obliged to change one's boots every time my wife sees a spot of mud on them !”

“ Now, you won't be long, Major ?”—cried the lady, as the Major went off attended by Caesar. “ The Major is so imprudent, and takes so little care of himself, he really makes me quite wretched—but how do you think he looks ?”

This was a general question, and rather a puzzling one.

“ As ugly as possible,” thought Gertrude, who would have been much at a loss to combine truth and politeness in her reply. Luckily there are people who always answer their own questions, when no one else seems disposed to do it, and Mrs Waddell went on.

“ He certainly was much the better of Harrogate—he was really looking so ill when he went there, that, I assure you, I was very uneasy.”

“ Whan did he ever look weel ?” was ready to burst from uncle Adam's lips ; but, by a magnanimous effort he drew them in, and remained silent.

“ Have you been lately at Bloom-Park, uncle :

for I understand there are pretty doings going on there?"

Mr Ramsay's only reply was a deep sonorous hem, and a bow, something in the style of a bull preparing to toss.

"We are just come from thence," replied Mrs St Clair, immediately launching forth into raptures at all she had seen and tasted.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs Waddell; "you have been either more fortunate or more favoured than I have been—for the Major and I went there yesterday, and could get no admittance, which, I must say, I thought very odd:—the people at the Lodge had the impertinence to refuse to let us in, which, to be sure, to a man of the Major's rank in life, and me a married woman, was a piece of insolence I never met with any thing to equal; but I told them I would let you know of their behaviour."

"I'm obliged to you," was the laconic reply.

"I really think they deserve to be turned off for their insolence."

"'Turned off' for doing their duty?" demanded uncle Adam, preparing to cast off his armour.

"A strange kind of duty, I think," retorted

the lady in equal indignation, “ to exclude your nearest relations from your house, and me a married woman, and a man of the Major’s rank.”

“ I never excluded you frae my house, Miss Bell,” quoth uncle Adam, now divested of all restraint, and disdaining to recognize her by her married appellation ; “ but if you mean that I’ll no mak’ you mistress o’ my property you’re perfectly right.—What’s your business at my house when I’m no there myself ?—What taks you there ?” in a key of interrogation at least equal to a squeeze of the thumb-screw.

“ I think it was a very natural curiosity——”

“ Naatral curiosity !” interrupted uncle Adam, now brimming high ; “ a bonny excuse or else no for breakin’ into other folks’ hooses—I wonder what your naatral curiosity will lead you to next !”

“ I think you are much obliged to any body that will take the trouble of looking a little after your affairs in that quarter—for I must just tell you, uncle, that you are making yourself quite ridiculous by submitting to be plundered and cheated on all hands, and——”

“ And what if it’s my pleeshure to be plunder-

ed and cheated, Miss, by the poor instead o' the rich?"

"I really wish, uncle, you would recollect you are speaking to a married woman," said Mrs Waddell with much dignity, "and that a man of the Major's——"

At that moment the Major entered, with a very red face, and a pair of new boots evidently too tight.

"You see what it is to be under orders," said he, pointing to his toes, and trying to smile in the midst of his anguish.

"It's lucky for you, Major, I'm sure, that you are—for I don't believe there ever was any body on earth so careless of themselves as you are.—What do you think of his handing Lady Fairacre to her carriage yesterday in the midst of the rain, and without his hat too? But I hope you changed your stockings as well as your boots, Major?"

"I assure you, upon my honour, my dear, neither of them were the least wet."

"O! now, Major, you know if you haven't changed your stockings I shall be completely wretched," cried the lady, all panting with emo-

tion.—“ Good gracious ! to think of your keeping on your wet stockings—I never knew any thing like it ! ”

“ I assure you, my dear Bell——” began the Major.

“ Oh ! now, my dearest Major, if you have the least regard for me, I beseech you put off your stockings this instant—Oh ! I am certain you’ve got cold already—how hot you are,” taking his hand ; “ and don’t you think his colour very high ?—now I’m quite wretched about you.”

In vain did the poor Major vow and protest, as to the state of his stockings—it was all in vain—the lady’s apprehensions were not to be allayed—and again he had to limp away to pull off boots, which the united exertions of himself and Cæsar had with difficulty got on.

“ I really think my wife will be for keeping me in a bandbox,” said he with a sort of sardonic smile, the offspring of flattered vanity and personal suffering.

As he was quitting the room, his aid-de-camp, Cæsar, entered with a mien of much importance, and, in his jargon, contrived to make it known, that something had happened to springs of Massa

Ramsay's chaise—that post-boy had gone to smith's to mend it, and that smith said chaise no be mend for soonest two hours.

“Then I shall find my way hame mysel’,” cried uncle Adam, starting up; “for I’ll no wait twa hours upon ony chaise that ever was driven.”

In vain were all attempts to detain him—he spurned the Waddell carriage—the Waddell dinner—refused even to wait till the Major had changed his stockings; in short, would do nothing but take his own way, which was to walk home, leaving Mrs and Miss St Clair to stay dinner and return in the evening.

No sooner was uncle Adam's back turned, than Mrs Waddell gave free scope to her indignation against him.—Turning to Gertrude,—

“I really think he is much worse than he was—I don't think you have any credit in your management of him, cousin—unless he alters his behaviour, I don't think it will be possible for the Major to keep company with him.—Did you hear how he Miss'd me to-day?—me a married woman! if the Major had been present he must have resented it.” Having, at length, exhausted her invectives, she next began to play off her

airs, by showing her house and furniture—boasting of her fine clothes—fine pearls—fine plate—fine connections—and, in short, taking all possible pains to excite the envy of her guests, by showing what a thrice happy married woman Mrs Major Waddell was. But Mrs St Clair had seen too much to be astonished at Mrs Waddell's finery, and Gertrude's more refined taste felt only pity and contempt for the vulgar sordid mind, that could attach ideas of happiness to such things. Provoked at the indifference with which her cousin saw and heard all this, she said—

“ I suppose, cousin, you are above regarding terrestrial objects now, since you have been living so long with our good aunts—I suppose you have learnt to despise the things of this world as beneath your notice.”

“ I have certainly learnt to admire goodness more than ever I did before,” said Gertrude, quite unconscious of the offence she had given by her indifference.

“ Oh ! then I suppose you are half converted by this time—we shall have you one of the godly ladies next.”

“ If you mean by godly, those who resemble

my aunts, I fear it will be long before I merit such an appellation ; but although, in comparison with them, I feel myself little better than a heathen, yet that does not hinder me from seeing and admiring their excellence—to deny merit to others, merely because one does not possess it themselves, is a sin, from which I shall ever pray, Good Lord deliver me !”

“ O, I see you are bit,” cried Mrs Waddell with a toss of her head ; “ I know that sort of thing is very infectious, so I hope you won’t bite me, cousin ; for, however it may do with Misses, I assure you, it would never answer in a married woman—and the Major has no notion of your *very good* ladies—he seems quite satisfied with me, bad as I am—Are you not, Major ?” to the poor Major, who once more made his appearance re-booted, and trying to look easy under the pressure of his *extreme* mistress.

“ Now, are you quite sure you changed your stockings, Major ? Are you not cheating me ? Cæsar, did the Major change his stockings ?”

Cæsar, with a low bow, confirmed the important fact, and that interesting question was, at length, set at rest. Mrs St Clair was too politic

to betray the disgust she felt, but Gertrude, alarmed at the prospect of sitting audience for the day to the Major and his Lady, expressed her wish to take a walk.

“ Dear me, cousin, are you so vulgar as to like walking ?” exclaimed Mrs Waddell ; “ I thought you would have been more of a fine lady by this time—for my part, I really believe I have almost forgot how to walk—when one has a carriage of their own, you know they have no occasion to walk, and I suppose few people do it from choice—you have quite spoilt me for a pedestrian, Major.”

Gertrude could not wait for the complimentary reply, she saw about to issue from the Major’s lips—but said—

“ As I am still so vulgar as to like walking, though not so unreasonable as to insist upon others doing it, you will, perhaps, allow me to take a peep at the beauties of Thornbank by myself ;” and she rose to leave the room, when the Major interposed, and making a lame attempt to be agile,

“ O, impossible !—you must allow me to have the honour of escorting you.”

“ Now, Major,” cried his Lady, “ I must lay

my commands upon you, not to stir out to-day again—it is a very damp raw day—I am sure my cousin will excuse you,” turning to Gertrude ; “ he had a most dreadful cold in his head last week,—I assure you I was quite frightened at it.”

“ Phoo ! nonsense, my dear,” said the Major, still hovering between delight and vexation ; “ nobody would have thought any thing of it but yourself.”

“ How can you say so, Major, when I counted that you sneezed seventeen times in the course of an hour and a half—and that’s what he calls nonsense !”

Leaving the loving pair to settle this tender dispute, Gertrude contrived to steal away from them.—“ Oh ! the luxury of solitude after the company of fools !” thought she, when she found herself outside the house, and alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

Now rest thee, reader ! on thy bench, and muse
Anticipative of the feast to come ;
So shall delight not make thee feel thy toil.
Lo ! I have set before thee ; for thyself
Feed now.

DANTE.

THORNBANK was situated on the side of a rapid gurgling river, abounding in picturesque rocky scenery. It was a meek, grey, autumnal day, when earth borrows no tint from sky, but, rich in its own natural hues, presents a matchless variety of colour, from the wan declining green to the gorgeous crimson and orange—nature's richest, saddest, panoply ! The sweet mournful song of the Robin was the only sound that mingled with the murmur of the stream. It was a day for musing and tender melancholy—a day that came o'er the heart “ like a melody that's sweetly played in tune.”

Trite as the reflections are which have been drawn from this solemn season, and obvious as is the moral which points to the heart at witnessing the decay of the beauties and the graces of the material world, still the same train of thought will naturally arise in every mind of sensibility, and the same sober hue insensibly steals over the soul,—“ hues which have words, and speak to ye of Heaven.”

Relieved from every tormenting object, Gertrude sat down on a rustic seat, hung round with many a drooping scentless flower, and resigning herself to the soothing influence of the day and the scene, she gradually sunk into those enchanting day-dreams—those beautiful chimeras which a young romantic imagination can so readily create. The pleasures of imagination certainly were hers, but as if only to render her more susceptible to the annoyances of real life.

She was recalled from the illusions in which she had been indulging by sounds little in unison with the harmonious stillness that surrounded her; a weak giggling laugh falling at intervals upon the ear, its pauses, filled by a sharp,

loud, English tongue, louder and louder, still drew near ; and presently Miss Lilly Black, leaning on the arm of a little, spruce, high-dressed young man, appeared. Much surprise, and joy, and affection, was testified by Miss Lillias at this meeting with her cousin, and Mr Augustus Larkins was introduced with an air of triumph and delight. Mr Augustus Larkins was what many would have called a pretty young man—he had regular features—very pink cheeks—very black eye-brows—and, what was intended for, a very smart expression. He was studiously dressed in the reigning fashion, but did not look fashionable for all that. He had a sharp, high-pitched voice, and a very strong, but not a pure, English accent. Such was the future cousin to whom Miss St Clair was now introduced ; and with many flourishing bows, and with much mouthing about honour, pleasure, and so forth on his part, the ceremony was happily got over.

“ Dear me, cousin, have you been sitting here by yourself ? ” said Miss Lilly, in a soft pitying tone ;—“ what a pity we did not know, and we could have come sooner, you must have been so dull ! ”

“ I did not find it so,” replied Gertrude.

“ Ah, you Scotch ladies are all fond of solitude,” cried Mr Larkins—“ Witness that noble apostrophe of my Lady Randolph’s in your celebrated tragedy of Douglas, ‘ Ye woods and wilds, whose melancholy gloom accords with my soul’s sadness, and draws forth the tear of sorrow from my bursting heart!’—How uncommonly well that was got up last season at Drury Lane ; you have, of course, been in town, Mem ?”

Gertrude replied in the affirmative.

“ And which of the houses did you give the preference to ?”

She had not visited the theatres.

“ No, sure !—is it possible, Mem, to have been in town without seeing either of the houses ? how prodigiously unfortunate ! but,”—with a significant smile to Miss Lilly—“ I hope we shall have the pleasure of showing your cousin the lions by-and-bye ; in town, we call it showing the lions, to show the sights and shows to our country-cousins.”

“ O, that will be delightful, won’t it, cousin ?” asked the simple Lilly,—but her cousin only coloured with contempt at the idea.

“The theatre is a favourite amusement of mine,” continued Mr Larkins.

“And of mine too, I am *so* fond of the play-house,” said Miss Lilly,—bent upon all occasions to prove the congeniality of their souls.

“Did you ever see Young in *Romeo*?”

“No, I don’t think I ever saw Mr Young act it, but I once saw a Mr Something else—I forget his name—do it.”

“La! I have seen Young at least a dozen times in *Romeo*,—it is a favourite character of mine; indeed, I have the whole part by heart.”

“Is that possible?” exclaimed Miss Lilly, in tenfold admiration of her lover’s perfections;—“do let us hear you repeat some of it—I’m sure my cousin would like it so much.”

“You must learn *Juliet*, and then I shall be your *Romeo*—you would make a capital *Juliet*—your hair is exactly the colour of Miss O’Neil’s.”

“Is it really? how I should like if I could act *Juliet*!”

“When I have you in *Liquorpond Street*,” whispered Mr Larkins—“we shall have some famous scenes.”

“ That will be charming ! I am so fond of deep tragedies ! ”

“ You don’t dislike comedy, I hope ? ”

“ O, no, I delight in comedies and farces—I like farces very much too.”

“ Some of the after-pieces we have in town are famously good—what a prodigious run *Midas* had, for instance ; ‘ *Pray, Goody,* ’ was sung for a whole season.”

“ O, ‘ *Pray, Goody,* ’ is, without exception, the most beautiful thing I ever heard ! ” exclaimed Miss Lilly, turning up her eyes in rapture.

“ How amazingly you will be pleased with some of our pantomimes in town ! what a famous good thing we had last winter at Covent Garden, called ‘ *The Oyster in Love!* ’ ”—here Miss Lilly giggled.

“ ‘ *Pon my soul, the Oyster in Love* was the title, and to let you into a little of a secret, it was composed, music and all, by a friend of mine— —”

“ O, goodness ! was it really—do tell us all about it.”

“ Why, the piece opens with a splendid marine view—waves—waves as high, Mem, as these trees, and as white—as white as your gown—

roaring in the most natural manner imaginable. Two of the ladies of my party, who had just returned from Margate, became, in short, perfectly seasick—'pon my soul, I thought they'd have fainted. However, it was the first night, and I was a friend of the author, so I wouldn't have stirred to have handed the finest woman in the house."

"O ! you cruel creature !" cried Miss Lilly with a giggle—" And what became of them ?"

"O ! they recovered with the assistance of smelling-bottles and oranges—but, 'pon my soul, I felt a little queer myself. Well, after the waves—these curly-headed monsters, as Shakespeare calls 'em—had rolled backwards and forwards, till, 'pon my honour, I thought they'd have been into the pit,—at last they retired in the most graceful manner possible, leaving behind 'em an enormous large oyster at the foot of a rock ; but the beautiful thing, Mem, was to see the stage, which, you know, represented the beach, all covered with shells, and spar, and sea-weed. You can have no conception of any thing so natural."

"O ! how I should like to have seen it," sighed Miss Lilly.

“ Well, then, there was this oyster, which you’d have sworn was a real oyster but for the size, lying at the bottom of the rock—then enters the divine Miss Foote, dressed as a princess, with the most splendid crown upon her head, all over with precious stones, but looking very melancholy, with her pocket-handkerchief in her hand.—She is attended by a troop of young damsels, all very beautiful, and most beautifully dressed—they sing and dance a most elegant new quadrille; and while they are dancing the oyster begins to move, and heaves a deep sigh, upon which they all take to their heels, and dance off in all directions, shrieking most musically in parts.—The princess, however, remains—draws near the oyster—contemplates it for some time—clasps her hands—falls upon her knees beside it, while it rolls, and heaves, and sighs —’pon my honour, it was quite affecting—I saw several handkerchiefs out.”

“ How terrified I should have been !” exclaimed Miss Lilly.

“ Well, then, the princess sings that charming song, which, of course, you know,

‘ This oyster is my world,
And I with love will open it.’

She then takes a diamond bodkin from her hair, and tries to open the shell. No sooner has she touched it than it opens a little bit, and the point of a beautiful long black beard comes out—the princess, in the greatest rapture, drops her bodkin—seizes the beard in both hands—kisses it—bedews it with her tears—presses it to her heart—and, in short, is in the greatest transports of joy at recognising her lover’s beard.”

“ Good gracious ! was the oyster her lover ?” cried Miss Lilly.

“ Wait and you shall hear. Well, while she is indulging in all these graceful demonstrations of the fondest affection, suddenly a sort of dragon or sea-horse starts up, seizes the bodkin and disappears. At the same moment the sky, that is, the stage, becomes almost quite dark—thunder and lightning ensue—the sea rises with the most tremendous noise, and threatens to engulf, in its raging bosom, the princess and the oyster——”

“ How interesting !” exclaimed Miss Lilly ;—
“ I never heard any thing like it !”

“ The sea gains upon them every moment.—

Now they are completely surrounded—she raises her eyes—sees the rock—a sudden thought strikes her—she merely stops to sing that sweet little air—‘ By that beard, whose soft expression,” (by-the-bye, that was twice encored ;) then, in the most graceful distress, she begins to climb the rock.”

“ How high was the rock ?” asked Miss Lily.

“ Why, I take it not less than thirty feet high, and almost quite perpendicular. Soft music is heard all the time she is ascending. She stops when about half way up, quite exhausted—then comes forward to the point of rock where she is standing, which, upon my soul, I don’t think was larger than my hand ;—and, while she stops to recover her breath, sings one of your beautiful Scotch songs—

‘ Low down, in the broom,
He’s waiting for me ;
Waiting for me, my love,’ &c.

Looking down upon the oyster all the while.—There was a great row then :—one half of the house called ‘ Encore,’ the other ‘ Go on.’ At length she was allowed to proceed, and she gains

the top of the rock just as an enormous wave is on the point of overwhelming her oyster."

"O! how dreadful!" wailed the sympathizing Lilly.

"What should you have done there?"

"O! I'm sure, I don't know."

"Well, she advances close to the edge of the rock—'pon my soul, it made me a little giddy to see her!—takes off her crown—unbinds her hair—lays down with her head hanging over the rock, and her hair falls down to the very bottom of the rock where the oyster is lying."

"Goodness! and her own hair?"

"Of course, you know a lady's wig becomes her own hair."

"O, you are so droll!" with a giggle.

"Well—the hair sticks to the oyster, or the oyster to the hair, I can't tell which, and slowly rising, she hoists him up—and up—and up—you might have heard a pin drop in the house while that was going on—till at last she has him on the very top of the rock!—then the house gave vent to its feelings, and a perfect tumult of applause and admiration ensued."

“ No wonder—I can’t conceive how she could do it. How big was the oyster ?”

“ Why, as large, I suppose, as a washing-tub.”

“ And to pull that up with her hair ! Did you ever hear any thing like it, cousin ?”

“ Never !” said Gertrude.

“ Now, tell us what was acted next ?”

“ Then there’s a fight between the dragon and a whale—and the whale throws up a fine diamond oyster knife at the feet of the princess—she seizes it—rat-tat-tats upon the shell, which instantly flies open with a prodigious noise, and out rushes a warrior, all clad in a complete suit of mother-of-pearl, with a fine long black pointed beard, the same he had shook out of his shell—he slays the dragon—the sea becomes as smooth as glass—Venus rises out of it in a car drawn by two doves harnessed with roses and guided by two young Cupids.”

“ How delightful ! and then, I suppose, they are married ?”

“ Ah ! their happiness would have been very incomplete without that termination,” said Mr Larkins, tenderly.

“ It must be late,” said Miss St Clair, rising ;
“ almost dinner time, I should suppose.”

“ Alas ! that Love, whose view is muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will.
Where shall we dine ?——”

cried Mr Larkins, in a theatrical manner.
“ You know, of course, that is out of Romeo.”

“ O, is it ?—I had forgot that, but it is beautiful,” said the complaisant Lilly.

Mr Larkins continued to talk and spout all the way home, and his fair to giggle and admire.

“ Well, cousin,” said she, seizing upon Gertrude, as they entered the house, “ what do you think of him ? Is he not charming ? so genteel, and so droll, and, at the same time, he has so much sensibility—he never travels without poetry—and he plays the flute too, most beautifully,—and he is so fond of the country, he says he is to drive me out of town every Sunday in his Tilbury.—O, I wonder how Bell could ever fall in love with the Major !—He hasn’t the least taste for poetry—and Andrew is such an ugly name ;—don’t you think I have been most fortunate in a name, for it is so uncommon to meet

with an Augustus—and I think Larkins very pretty too—don't you?"

But they were now at the drawing-room door, which put a stop to Miss Lilly's raptures, and soon after, dinner ended all *tête-à-têtes*.

Mrs Major Waddell played the Nabob's lady as though she had been born a Nabobess—she talked much and well of curry and rice—and old Madeira—and the liver—and the Company—which did not mean the present company, but the India Company. Her silver corners were very handsome, and she had to take off some of her rings before she could carve the grouse. In short, nothing could be better of its kind. Nevertheless, Mrs Major had her own petty chagrins, as every petty mind must have—nobody seemed sufficiently dazzled with the splendour which surrounded them—and Mr Larkins had the ill breeding to talk much of Birch's turtle, and Thames salmon, and town. At tea, it was still worse—like all under-bred people, he mistook familiarity for fashionable ease, and either lounged upon her fine sofa, or stood with his back to the fire.

At length the chaise was announced, and as

Mrs and Miss St Clair took leave, the gallant Major presented his arm. "Oh! now, Major, I hope you're not going to the door without your hat, and at this time of night! Now, it will make me perfectly wretched—pray now, Major—aunt—cousin—Mr Larkins—for Heaven's sake——"

Mrs Waddell was getting hysterical, and the poor Major withdrawing his offered aid, Mr Larkins advanced.

"And, oh! put on your hat!" sighed Miss Lilly, in imitation, as he boldly presented his brush head to the evening air.

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears——"

spouted Mr Augustus, as he handed the ladies into the carriage. They bowed and drove off

CHAPTER XV.

On s'ennuie très bien ici.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT the present order of things could not long endure. Mrs St Clair grew impatient under the secret sense of her sisters' superiority, and weary of their simple uniform style of living. Her habits were luxurious—her mind was joyless. Gertrude, too, in all the restlessness of suspense, longed to return to Rossville. She would there hear her lover's name mentioned—she would be amidst the scenes with which his image was associated—and there would be enjoyment even in these shadowy fantastic pleasures. While such were the feelings of the mother and daughter, Lord Rossville felt no less impatient for the return of his niece—not for the charms and graces of her society, but because she was a being subject to his management and control. True, this act of rebellion might have

staggered his faith as to the extent of his dominion; but he flattered himself that was a sort of thunder-cloud, which, by the wise and vigorous measures he had adopted, must already have passed away. Besides, Gertrude's prolonged absence would have an appearance in the eyes of the world—suspicions might arise—things might be said. Even in the bustle of electioneering, Mr Delmour had remarked upon the impropriety of Miss St Clair being allowed to reside so long in a paltry provincial town, and associating with people who might be very good in their way, but were not quite suited to her station, or such as he would wish his wife to be intimate with. On the other hand, Mrs St Clair, in the course of her correspondence with the Earl, had taken care to insinuate, that such was Mr Adam Ramsay's partiality for her daughter, it was more than probable he would make a point of her residing entirely with him, unless she were speedily recalled to his Lordship's protection. The visit to Bloom-Park strengthened this insinuation, and decided him as to the necessity of immediately recalling his niece.

A most laborious and long winded letter was

therefore penned to Miss St Clair, in which, while he deprecated the idea of ever taking her into his favour, until she had renounced the error of her ways, he, at the same time, announced his intention of receiving her again under his roof, in the confident hope that she would ere long perceive the absolute necessity, and imperious duty she was under of acceding to his long-projected, thoroughly-digested, and firmly-determined-upon plan for her ultimate disposal. His Lordship next proceeded to state, that he had consulted the most eminent counsel as to the deeds of entail, and that three of them were of opinion, that the whole of the property could and might be most effectively alienated, disposed, and otherwise disposed of, to the utter exclusion of Miss St Clair, as heiress-at-law.—Such being the case, it was his firm intention, and absolute purpose, to act upon this opinion, by executing a new deed of entail within three months from the present date, unless, before the expiry of that period, Miss St Clair should think proper to accede to his plan, and pursue the course he had pointed out to her.—Such was the substance of a letter filling nearly seven pages of closely written paper.

“ I am sorry—very sorry,” said Gertrude, with a sigh, as she finished reading it, “ for the trouble and vexation I am causing Lord Rossville; and perhaps it were better that I should never return to Rossville again, than that I should go there only to make him cherish hopes which never can be realized.—I never can act as he would have me—I never can change my sentiments.”

“ You can at least keep your sentiments to yourself, considering how much is at stake on their account,” said her mother with asperity; “ and, indeed, setting every thing else out of the question, I think delicacy alone demands that much of you;—at least, I should be cautious how I expressed an attachment, which, to all appearance, is no longer—if indeed it ever was—reciprocal.”

“ Even were it so,” replied her daughter, making an effort to repress her emotion, while her faltering voice betrayed the anguish of such a supposition—“ deceived I may be myself, but I never will deceive others—let, then, Lord Rossville know, that, if I return to his house, I return unchanged—unchangeable.”

“Beware how you provoke me, Gertrude, for I, too, am unchanged—unchangeable in my determination, never to see you the prey of that man.—I have pledged my word it shall not be.”

“Pledged your word !” repeated her daughter, indignantly ;—“who had a right to demand such a pledge ?”

“One who has the right, and will exercise it,” said Mrs St Clair, in some agitation ; “but this is wandering from the point. You have promised you will not enter into any engagement until you have attained the age of twenty-one—on that promise I rely ; meanwhile, all I require of you is only what is due to yourself—leave me, therefore, to manage matters with the Earl, and do you remain passive for the present.”

“I am sick of management—of mystery,” exclaimed Gertrude, dejectedly—“already,” cried she, giving way to tears. “I am almost weary of the world—I feel myself a puppet—a slave—nay, the slave of a slave—subject, it seems, to the control of a very menial ; but I will not endure this mockery of greatness, mingled, too, with such degradation.”

There was a height and a depth in the feel-

ings of Miss St Clair which, when once roused, her mother could not always contend with. She sometimes felt, that her only chance of victory was in appearing to yield; and upon this occasion, as upon many others, she contrived to work upon her daughter's affections, and prevailed upon her to acquiesce in her wishes, provided she were not considered as a party in Lord Rossville's plans.

The following day, the Earl's equipage and attendants arrived; and again Mrs St Clair's worldly mind exulted as she looked on the proud pageant at which the whole town of Barnford had turned out to gaze. It was not without emotion Gertrude bade adieu to her aunts, who were not less affected at parting with her: they saw she was not happy, but were too delicate to intrude upon her confidence.

"Farewell, my love," said her aunt Mary, as she pressed her in her arms—"and ever bear in mind, that, in this world, not to be grieved—not to be afflicted—not to be in danger, is impossible:—yet, dearest Gertrude! even in this world, there *is* a rest of heart—ah! would you but seek it where only it is to be found!"

But to the young unchastened spirit, nothing seems less desirable than that rest of heart, which, in their minds, is associated with the utter extinction of all that is noble, and graceful, and enthusiastic, and Gertrude shrank from the wish breathed for her by her aunt.

No," thought she—"wretched as I am, yet I would not exchange my feelings, tortured as they are, for that joyless peace, which is to me as the slumber of the dead!"

And where is the youthful ardent spirit, untaught of Heavenly love, which has not, at some period of its life, periled its all on some baseless fabric, and preferred even the shattered wreck of its happiness to the waveless calm of indifference?

Gertrude's melancholy was not diminished by her return to Rossville. But a few weeks had passed since she had left it in all the pride and magnificence of early autumn—while nature seemed scarcely past its prime—while life was in the leaf, and spirit in the air, and the bright toned woods glowed in all their variegated splendour, beneath a clear blue sky, and cloudless sun.

“ And now the cold autumnal dews are seen
To cobweb every green ;
And by the low-shorn rowans doth appear
The fast declining year ;
The sapless branches doff their summer suits,
And wane their winter fruits ;
And stormy blasts have fore’d the quaking trees
To wrap their trembling limbs in suits of mossy
frieze.”

In plain prose, it was a bleak, raw, chill November day, when nature seems a universal blank even to her most ardent admirers ; and to use an artist phrase, nothing could be more *in keeping* with the day than the reception Miss St Clair met with from her uncle. It was cold, formal, and unkindly, and every word fell like a drop of petrifying water on her heart.

Lord Rosville never had been upon easy terms with his niece—indeed, it was not in his nature to be upon easy terms with any body ; but the additional stiffness, and solemnity, and verbosity, he thought proper to assume, were truly appalling, and caused her something of that sensation sensitive beings are said to feel while under the influence of a thunder-cloud.

The Earl's aspect was, indeed, enough to

blight hope itself. There was positive determination in every line and lineament—his eyes had grown rounder—his eye-brows higher—his lips more rigid—his hands longer—his steps were more ponderous—his head was immoveable—there was no speculation in his eye—his very wig looked as hard as marble. In short, over the whole man was diffused an indescribable air of hopeless inflexibility.

There was no company—nothing to relieve the hard outline of the piece—not even the usual members of the family; nobody but Lady Betty and her eternal rug—and her fat lap-dog—and her silly novel; and the dulness and tedium which reigned, may have been felt, but cannot be described.

CHAPTER XVI.

If thou hast dipt thy foot in the river, yet pass not over Rubicon.

SIR THOMAS BROWN.

SEVERAL days passed in this state of cheerless monotony, when, one morning, as the ladies pursued their different avocations in unsocial companionship, a letter was brought to Mrs St Clair, which she had no sooner opened, than Gertrude observed her change colour, and betray visible signs of agitation. The servant said the bearer waited an answer, and, in manifest confusion, she rose and left the room. Although superior to the meanness of curiosity, Miss St Clair could not help feeling a natural desire to know the contents of a letter which had produced so visible a change on her mother, and she sat a considerable time vainly looking for her return. At length, unable to repress her anxiety, she put aside her drawing

materials, and hastened to her mother's dressing-room. Upon entering, she found Mrs St Clair seated at a table, with writing implements before her, and her head resting on her hand, seemingly buried in profound meditation.

"I was afraid something was the matter, mama," said her daughter, gently advancing towards her.

"Leave me!" cried her mother, in an angry impatient tone; "leave me, I say—I can't be disturbed."

"Mama, can I do nothing for you?" asked her daughter, as she reluctantly prepared to obey.

"Much, much,"—murmured Mrs St Clair, with a deep sigh—"but, at present, I desire you will leave me," raising her voice in an authoritative tone; and Gertrude, however unwillingly, found herself compelled to obey. Uneasy and restless, she could not compose her mind to any of her ordinary occupations. She saw something had occurred to agitate her mother, and she longed to participate, and, if possible, to aid her in her distress. After a while, she again returned to her, and was again repulsed with anger. Seeing that her presence only caused irritation, she desisted from far-

ther attempts ; and, taking advantage of a watery gleam of sunshine, which streamed from a pale, sickly sky, she set out on a solitary ramble, to which fresh air and exercise only could give a zest. She slowly pursued her way through leafless woods, where the only sounds she heard were those of her own footsteps amongst the fallen leaves, and the monotonous rush of the swollen stream. But each step was fraught with sad, yet soothing recollections — for rocks, woods, and waters, seemed all as the registers of her lover's vows ; and in each silent memorial she felt as though she looked on the living witness of his faith. Thus nursing her fond contemplations, she had wandered a considerable length of way, when she was roused to observation by the sudden darkness of the sky—but whether caused by the lateness of the hour, or the approach of a storm, she was not sufficiently mistress of signs and times to ascertain. Whichever it might be, it had the effect of dispelling all romance, and making her wish herself once more safe at home. She was, however, more than two miles from it, by the way she had come, but, if she could get across the river, there was a short cut, which would take her home in ten

minutes, and she walked a little farther on in search of some stepping-stones, which had been placed there instead of a bridge, which had been swept away by what, in the language of the country, is called a *speat*.

A great deal of rain had fallen the preceding night, and the river was so much swollen, she could scarcely recognise the huge blocks by which she had frequently crossed the clear pebbly stream when it scarcely laved their sides. Now they merely held their broad heads above the brown sullen waters—but still they were above it—and, trusting to her own steady head and firm step, she, with some little palpitation, placed her foot on the first stone, “*C’est ne que la première pas qui conte,*” said she to herself; but, notwithstanding this comfortable assurance, there she stood for some minutes ere she had courage to venture on a second step. But the sky was getting blacker, and some large straggling drops of rain began to fall. Ashamed of her irresolution, she was about to proceed, when she heard some one calling loudly to her to stop, and immediately she beheld Mr Lyndsay approaching at full speed on horseback. In an instant he urged his horse in-

to the river, but the current was so strong, it was with the utmost difficulty the animal was enabled to gain the opposite side.

“Is it possible,” cried Lyndsay, as he threw himself off, “that you were going to attempt to cross the river in its present state?”

“I not only mean to attempt but to succeed,” answered she, as she felt her courage rise to its utmost pitch, since she had now an opportunity of displaying it, and she was about to proceed, when he seized her hand—

“You are not aware of the danger:—the river, you may see, is far above its usual height, and is rising every moment. A great deal of rain has fallen, and a fresh flood will be down directly.”

“Well, it seems merely a choice of evils, as I seem destined to be drowned one way or another,” said Gertrude, as the rain now began to fall in earnest.

“I assure you, then, you will find it much the least evil to be drowned on dry land—so, pray, take my advice for once.”

But Gertrude felt as though it were due to Colonel Delmour to accord nothing to Mr Lyndsay, against whom she laboured to keep up what she

deemed a due resentment, and she, therefore, persisted in her intention.

“ I am far from desiring Mr Lyndsay’s attendance,” said she somewhat disdainfully. “ I beg he will take his way, and allow me to take mine.”

Lyndsay made no reply but by hastily snatching her from the place where she stood—and, at the same instant, a sound as of many waters was heard—a sea of foam was tearing its course along—and, in the twinkling of an eye, the stones were buried in the waves. For some moments Gertrude remained motionless, gazing on the mass of discoloured waters as they roared along, till she was roused by the cry and the struggle of some living thing, which was swept past with the speed of lightning, and engulfed in the raging flood. She turned shuddering away; and Lyndsay, taking her arm in his, would have led her from the spot—but, smote with the sense of her own injustice towards him, she exclaimed,—

‘ Not till I have here acknowledged my rashness—my folly; you risked your life to save mine, while I—unjust—ungrateful, that I was ——’

“ Not to me, my dear cousin, is any such acknowledgment due,” said Mr Lyndsay, mildly;

—"give your thanks to God—only let us be friends."

Gertrude gave him her hand.—"When can I cease to look upon you as my friend!—you who have saved me from destruction!"

Lyndsay sighed, but made no reply, and they walked on in silence, till the rain, which had hitherto fallen at intervals, in an undecided manner, now burst forth, in what in Scotland is emphatically called an *even-down pour*. Neither rocks nor trees afforded any shelter, but they were now in sight of a summer-house, and thither they hastened. While Lyndsay stopped on the outside to fasten his horse, intending to leave him until he could send his servant to fetch him home, Gertrude rushed in, and, almost blinded by the rain, did not, at first, perceive that some one had already taken possession of it, and was pacing up and down with visible signs of impatience. But, at her entrance, the person turned quickly round, and she encountered the sharp baleful glance of Lewiston.

"Ha! this is more than I expected," cried he, in an accent of pleasure and surprise; then taking her passive hand, "This is well—this is as it

should be—come, my pretty messenger, sit down, don't be afraid."

But this caution, though uttered in a soft conciliating manner, was in vain. At first, amazement had rendered Gertrude mute and motionless; but as he attempted to seat her, and place himself beside her, she instantly regained her faculties, and struggling to release herself from his hold, she called loudly—

"Mr Lyndsay, save me! oh! save me!"

But Mr Lyndsay had withdrawn a few yards, to place his horse under the shelter of a projecting rock, and the roar of the river drowned all other sounds.

"Fool!" exclaimed Lewiston, as he held both her hands, and squeezed them with almost painful violence; "be still, I tell you—be still, and you have nothing to fear; but if you provoke me—by Heaven! you will rue the day you first saw the light!" and he compelled her to be seated.

Gertrude would have spoken, but the words died on her lips, and she sat pale and trembling, unable to articulate.

"Why, this is foolish," cried he, but in a gen-

tlar tone—"very foolish.—Have I not told you, that you have nothing to fear—that I love you too well?—The deuce!—cannot you be quiet?"—As Gertrude again called wildly on Mr Lyndsay—"Why, did you come here only to squall, you simpleton?—Why did she not come herself, and where is the money?—answer me, I say:—A squire, by Jupiter!" exclaimed he fiercely, as Lyndsay now entered—"Well, Sir, what is your business here?"

Mr Lyndsay started with surprise, as he beheld Miss St Clair seated by the side of this man, whom he instantly recognized as the same from whom he had formerly rescued her: but her extreme paleness, and the terror depicted on her countenance, showed what her endurance cost her. The insolent question was repeated in a still higher key. Even Lyndsay's usual calmness was almost overcome, but he repelled the rising of his wrath, and answered—

"My business here is to protect this lady from insult or intrusion,"—and advancing to her, he placed himself by her side.

"O let us begone!" cried Gertrude, as she

rose and took hold of his arm ; but she trembled so much she could scarcely stand.

“ You cannot go yet,” said Lyndsay ; then turning to Lewiston—“ but as your presence seems to agitate Miss St Clair, I must request of you to withdraw.”

“ By what right, Sir, do you interfere between this lady and me ?” demanded he fiercely.

“ I know of no right you have to ask me such a question,” said Mr Lyndsay coolly.

“ *You* know of no right I have !—and pray what do you know of me or my rights ?”

Lyndsay’s blood rose at this continued insolence ; but, making an effort to master his spirit, he replied—

“ You say true, I know nothing of you ; but I know you can have no right to alarm Miss St Clair—if you have any claim upon her notice, this is neither a place nor a time for it.”

“ Her notice !” repeated Lewiston, with a scornful smile—“ Well, be it so ! I *have* claims upon her notice then, and you will do well to leave us to settle our own affairs.”

“ Oh, no—no !” cried Gertrude, as she clung to her cousin’s arm—“ do not leave me.—I have

nothing to say.”—But as she thought of her mother’s mysterious connection with him, she trembled while she disclaimed him.

“Do not be afraid,” said Lyndsay, trying to reassure her—“there is nothing to fear, except insolence; and that I shall spare you, if this gentleman will walk out with me for a few minutes.”

“I have already told you, that I have no business with you, Sir,” said Lewiston—“and the insolence is yours, who thus break in upon my appointments.—Come, my dear,” to Gertrude, “rid yourself of your spark quietly, for I don’t wish to harm the young man—tell him the truth, and bid him begone.”

Never in his life had Mr Lyndsay’s self-control been so severely tried, but he still had firmness to keep himself in check.

“I know of no appointment,” said Gertrude faintly, as she thought of the letter her mother had that morning received,—“accident alone brought me here.”

Lewiston looked stedfastly at her.

“You are sure that is the case? Take care how you attempt to deceive me—your hand upon it.”

Gertrude involuntarily recoiled.

“How dare you thus presume?” cried Lyndsay passionately; but in an agony of terror, she hastily held out her hand. Lewiston seized it, and holding it up with an air of insolent triumph—

“’Tis well you obeyed me—else, by all the saints, in another second I should have had you on your knees before me.”

“Audacious villain!” exclaimed Mr Lyndsay, provoked beyond farther forbearance, and seizing him by the collar, shook him with a force that made him stagger. “This lady’s presence alone prevents me from punishing you as you deserve.”

Gertrude shrieked, as Lewiston instantly drew a small dagger-sword from his walking cane.

“Do you see that?” cried he, with a scornful laugh. “How easily I could pink one of those fine eyes of yours, or open a vein for you, and let out a little of your hot blood;—but I don’t think the worse of you for this exploit, and only give you this little piece of advice, before you talk of punishing, to be sure you have the means in your own hands.”

“I thank you,” said Lyndsay, as he led Ger-

trude to the door, then turning back, he added, in a low voice, “ and I shall return to repeat my acknowledgments—only wait me here.”

The rain had not ceased, but its violence had abated, and they walked on for some time in silence, till they both at the same moment descried Mrs St Clair approaching, muffled in a large cloak—but she, too, seemed to have perceived them, for she instantly turned back, and in another moment disappeared by one of the many paths which traversed the wood.

“ Oh !” exclaimed Gertrude, with a burst of bitter feeling at this confirmation of her mother’s clandestine intercourse. “ Oh ! that the flood from which you saved me had swept me away, rather than that I should live to endure this degradation !”

“ My dear cousin,” said Mr Lyndsay, gently, “ do not give way to such dreadful thoughts—were you steeped in crime, you could not do more than despair—even then you ought not to do that.”

“ Crime there must be somewhere,” cried Gertrude, in the same tone of excitement ; “ else

why all this mystery—and why am I subjected to the insults of that man, unless——”

“Do you know who and what he really is?” said Mr Lyndsay.

“O, ask me no questions!” cried she again, giving way to tears.

“Pardon me, I have done wrong—it is not from you I ought to seek information.”

“Seek it not at all—leave me to my fate—abject and degraded I already am in your eyes.”

“How little you know me, if you think that circumstances, over which you evidently have no control, could ever lessen you in my eyes!—It is not the misdeeds of others that can touch your soul—and they ought not to influence your character. There is not—there cannot be degradation but in personal sin.”

“Yet I owe it entirely to your generous confidence, that I am not suspected—despised——”

“Suspicion itself scarcely could suspect you; and for despising you—do not think so falsely, so meanly of yourself, as to imagine that any one would dare to despise you. I fear something is wrong, and that you are not in good hands; but put your trust in God, my dear cousin—preserve

your own natural integrity, and all will one day be right :—meantime, if I can be of service to you, look upon me as a friend—as a brother—will you promise me this ?”

Gertrude, in somewhat calmer accents, promised she would. Lyndsay continued to talk to her in the same soothing yet strengthening strain till they reached the Castle, when they separated with sentiments of reciprocal interest and regard.

CHAPTER XVII.

What man so wise, so earthly witt so ware
 As to descry the crafty cunning traine,
 By which deceit doth maske in visour faire,
 And cast her colours died deep in graine.
 To seem like truth, whose shape she well can feigne.
Ferry Queen.

No sooner had Mr Lyndsay seen Miss St Clair safe within the Castle walls, than he instantly retraced his steps with the intention of returning to the summer-house, for the purpose of extricating her, if possible, from the mysterious thralldom in which she seemed to be held by this person. At the midnight *recontre* in the wood, he had asserted a right over her, which, although she herself had disclaimed with almost frantic wildness, her mother had tacitly acknowledged by not directly denying. In the short conversation he had held with Mrs St Clair, subsequent to that meeting, she had with tears implored his

silence—his secrecy—his forbearance—and in broken and indirect terms, had given him to understand that this person had been engaged with her husband in certain money transactions, which, out of regard to his memory, she was desirous of keeping concealed ; and it was upon this ground he had asserted a claim upon Miss St Clair's fortune, which he had unwarrantably extended to her hand. This mangled and absurd account could not impose upon Lyndsay, but, at that time, he was almost a stranger to Mrs St Clair, and did not conceive himself authorized to interfere in her concerns. He, therefore, contented himself with mildly admonishing her on the impropriety of such clandestine meetings, and recommending to her to lay this person's claims before Lord Rossville, as the proper protector of his brother's memory, and his niece's interest. In the meantime, he yielded to Mrs St Clair's entreaties, and gave her his promise not to divulge what had passed, upon her solemn assurance that the affair was in the way of being amicably adjusted, and that she had taken effectual means of ridding herself for ever of this person's importunity. 'This promise, it now appeared, had not been kept; again Miss St

Clair had been exposed to fresh insult in his presence, and he now thought himself entitled to interpose. With this purpose he walked quickly back, and had almost reached the summer-house, when he was met by Mrs St Clair ; her countenance was agitated, and traces of tears were visible in her eyes. She did not, however, now seem to shun him, for she stopped and extended her hand to him, saying—" You are the very person I most wish to see,—give me your arm, and let us return together,—I have much to say to you "

" But there is a person there to whom I also have much to say ; and I cannot have the honour of attending you, till I have first spoken with him." And he was passing on, when Mrs St Clair caught his arm,—

" I know whom you seek ; but spare yourself the trouble—he is gone."

" Where?—which way ?" eagerly demanded he ; " but I must ascertain that myself," and he ran with all his speed to the summer-house ; but it was deserted ; and, though he looked long and keenly in all directions, not a trace of any one was

to be seen. He was therefore obliged to retrace his steps, and soon overtook Mrs St Clair.

“ You would not give credit to me, then ? ” said she, in a tone of reproach.

“ I shall give credit to you now,” answered he, “ if you will tell me where I am likely to find the person I left here half an hour ago.”

“ I cannot tell—and, if I could, perhaps I would not. No good could possibly result from your meeting—your wish, I know, is to befriend my daughter and myself; and, be assured, I am far from insensible of the value of such a friend—But, come with me, I have much to say to you, much to confide to you of my dearest Gertrude.”

Mrs St Clair’s hyperbolical jargon was always offensive to Mr Lyndsay’s good taste and right feeling; but there was something absolutely revolting in it at this time—there was something so strained and unnatural in it—such a flimsy attempt at thus seeming to court explanation, that he felt armed against the duplicity he was aware would be practised upon him.

“ At another time I shall be ready to listen to anything which concerns Miss St Clair,” said he,

coldly ; “ but, at present, I wish to put a few questions to the person ——”

“ Pardon me ; but I know all you would say, my dear Mr Lyndsay ; and you must allow me to anticipate those questions by the confidential communication I am now about to make to you. On your honour—on your secrecy I know I may place the most unbounded reliance—I therefore require no assurances to satisfy me.”

“ I certainly can give none until I know how far secrecy may be compatible with honour.”

Mrs St Clair affected not to hear this implied doubt, but went on—

“ You have now had opportunities of becoming acquainted with my daughter—of forming your own opinion of her character—of—pardon a mother’s vanity—of appreciating her charms and her graces ;—but you know n t—None but a mother can know, the treasures of her heart and mind.”

Mrs St Clair paused and sighed, and Mr Lyndsay was too much surprised at such an opening to make any reply.

“ Judge, then, at my grief and anguish at finding this gifted being, this idol of my affections,

ensnared by the artifices of one every way unworthy of her, has been led to bestow her regards ——”

“ Pardon me,” cried Lyndsay ; “ but I can have no possible right to be made the depository of Miss St Clair’s sentiments by any but herself. I must be excused from listening to any thing more on that subject—I simply wish to know where I am likely to find the person who has, twice in my presence, dared to insult her.”

“ Yet it is only by hearing me patiently, and suffering me to take my own way in divulging the circumstances of the case, as I think best, that I can possibly make you acquainted with them—either my lips must be sealed as to the whole, or you must listen to the whole without interruption. —I am mistaken if I tell you any thing new, when I allude to my daughter’s misplaced partiality, still more mistaken, if her future happiness is a matter of indifference to you.”

Lyndsay made no answer ; he felt that Mrs St Clair was weaving a web around him, but he could not bring himself to burst from its folds, and he suffered her to proceed.

“ I will not attempt to paint to you the anguish

of my heart at discovering, that the innocent affections of my unsuspecting child had been thus artfully and insiduously worked upon by Colonel Delmour. I know him, and you know him to be a selfish, mercenary, unprincipled man, as incapable of appreciating such a being as Gertrude, as she would have been of bestowing her affections on a character such as his, had not her imagination been dazzled and misled. But, alas! at seventeen, where is our judgment and discrimination? Yet at seven-and-twenty they will come too late—then, long before then, if she becomes the wife of Colonel Delmour, she will be the most wretched of women. Formed to find her happiness solely in the being she loves—noble, generous, upright, sincere, herself, what will be her feelings when the mask drops, as drop it will, from this idol of her fancy, and she beholds him in his native deformity.—No—sooner than see her the wife of Colonel Delmour, I take Heaven to witness, I would rather look upon her in her coffin.”

Inflated as all this was, still there was much of truth and right feeling in it, and he insensibly

forgot his suspicions, and listened with profound attention.

“ Yet I dare not express to Lord Rossville all that I feel, for neither can I accede to his views for the disposal of my daughter. Gertrude has too much taste and feeling—too much heart and soul—to be sacrificed to family pride, and political influence ; in fact, as far as regards her happiness, there is but a choice of evils in these brothers—but there is one ——” she stopped and hesitated ; “ there is one to whom I would, with pride and pleasure, have confided my dearest treasure, in the certainty that, as her judgment matured, so her love and esteem would increase towards that one.—Why should I conceal from you my wish ?”

Mrs St Clair made a full stop, and looked at Mr Lyndsay in a manner he could not misunderstand.

This was something he had not anticipated—it went far beyond what he had calculated upon, and he was thrown off his guard. His features betrayed his emotion, although he remained silent. There was a long pause. At length Mrs St Clair resumed—

“ The time will come when the veil will fall from my daughter’s eyes—as her judgment ripens her imagination will decline—already I can perceive the work is begun, and time is all that is wanting to finish it ;—but if, as may happen, she is hurried into a clandestine engagement, my hopes—her happiness—will be for ever blasted!—On the other hand, if, by any sacrifice, any stratagem, I can save her, can you blame me for the attempt, however wild or desperate it may appear ?”

“ I certainly could not blame a sacrifice however vain it might prove,” said Lyndsay ; “ but I must always disapprove of stratagems, even when successful—both together seem to me incompatible.”

For a moment Mrs St Clair was thrown into confusion by this remark, but, quickly rallying, she replied—

“ Yet the one may prove the consequence of the other—in my case I fear it has—and that, in using what I conceived an allowable stratagem to save my daughter, I have sacrificed what I value next—the good opinion and esteem of Mr Lyndsay.”

“ It rests with yourself to remove any unfavourable impression I may have received—a few words will suffice.”

“ I feel that you will blame me—that you will condemn the step I have taken,” said Mrs St Clair, in evident embarrassment ;—“ it must appear to you strange—unworthy—unnatural—but you know not the difficulties of my situation :—Gertrude rash and ungovernable—Lord Rossville inflexible and exacting. If she marries Colonel Delmour, her fortune and her happiness are both alike blasted—to save her from that—at least, to gain time, can you altogether condemn me if I have taken advantage of this person’s unwarranted claim upon her fortune, to induce a belief in her mind, that that claim does in reality extend to her hand, and that——But, oh Heavens !” exclaimed she, as they suddenly came in sight of the Castle, “ it must be very late—lights in the drawing-room, and company assembled !—if I am missed——To-morrow we shall resume this subject; meantime, I must fly ;”—and she would have withdrawn her arm from Mr Lyndsay’s, but he detained her—

“ No,” said he ; “ before we part, promise me

solemnly, that you will lay open to me the whole of this dark transaction—strange thoughts have taken possession of my mind. I will no longer connive at this mystery.”

It was too dark to see the working of Mrs St Clair’s features ; but he felt the hand he held tremble in his grasp.

“ To-morrow, then—to-morrow, dear Mr Lyndsay, I promise to satisfy you more fully,” said she in a voice faint from agitation—“ till then be silent, I conjure you—for Gertrude’s sake be silent.—Oh ! do not detain me—there is the warning bell.”

And she darted forwards, and ran till she reached the door, then turning round, she pressed Lyndsay’s hand, and in breathless accents whispered—“ For Gertrude’s sake, then, you will be silent till to-morrow—you promise me this.”

“ Till to-morrow, then, be it,” said he.

Mrs St Clair again pressed his hand in token of gratitude, then entered softly, and stole up stairs to change her dress, while Mr Lyndsay, as he walked openly and deliberately to his apartment, thought—“ She has got the better of me, I fear, after all—but to-morrow will show.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

Such deep despondence rends her trembling heart,
Conscious of deeds which honour cannot own.

EURIPIDES.

ALTHOUGH Mr Lyndsay had made all dispatch in dressing, yet, upon entering the drawing-room, he found Mrs St Clair had got the start of him.

No appearance of hurry or agitation was now visible, unless in her more than usually brilliant colour. Her dress was handsome, and well arranged—her air, to common observers, easy and unembarrassed, and altogether, she formed a striking contrast to her daughter, who sat by her, pale, thoughtful, and dejected, with the look of one who had almost unconsciously suffered herself to be dressed.

As Mr Lyndsay entered, he heard Mrs St Clair say to Lord Rossville, in answer to some remark of his—

“ I was, indeed, caught to-day—I foolishly took the alarm at Gertrude’s absence during that prodigious shower, and set out in search of her myself—but we missed each other, and have now only met by the side of your Lordship’s charming fire.”

Lord Rossville loved to be complimented upon his fires, which were always constructed after a model of his own, and were, of course, notoriously bad—but Mrs St Clair knew how to throw out a tub to catch a whale—her well-timed compliment led to a discussion upon fires, stoves, and coals, which ended in the whole company being speedily involved in the intricacies of one of the Earl’s own coal-pits, from which they were only rescued by a summons to dinner

Mr Delmour had returned, bringing a band of his second-rate political allies along with him, and the conversation consequently took its cast from them, and was as dull as political discussions always are, unless when worse than dull—violent. Mrs St Clair entered into all that was said *con amore*, and was consequently thought, by the greater part of the company to be an uncommon clever, charming, well-informed, lady-

like woman. Lady Betty asked some questions as efficient as usual, and passed for a very worthy, sensible, affable, old lady. Miss St Clair sat silent, and absent, and indifferent to what was going on, and was pronounced a cold, haughty, inanimate, fine lady. Such are the judgments daily passed upon as slight a knowledge of that within which passeth show—and so superficial a thing is popularity.

On quitting the dining-room, Mrs St Clair whispered her daughter to follow her to her own apartment, and no sooner were they there, than, shutting the door with violence, she seemed as if eager to indemnify herself for the constraint she had been under.

“ Gertrude !” cried she, all at once giving way to her agitation ;—“ again you see me in your hands—again my fate hangs on your decision—again it is yours to save or to destroy me !”

Gertrude could not speak—her heart sickened at the evil she anticipated.

“ But I will not go over the same ground I have done :—I tell you, I am at your mercy, but I will neither supplicate nor command—I leave you

free—pronounce my doom, and do not fear even my reproaches.”

Gertrude’s senses almost forsook her, as the dreadful idea flashed upon her, that she was to be required to save her mother’s life, at the expence of becoming the wife of the dreaded Lewiston, and sinking at her feet, in wild broken accents, she besought her to spare her.

“Compose yourself, Gertrude,” cried Mrs St Clair, suddenly calmed herself at sight of her daughter’s still stronger emotion—“I tell you, you have nothing to fear from me—I have promised that I will not even seek to influence you; all I require of you is to hear the alternative.”

“Oh, no—no—spare me that dreadful alternative—kill me—but save me from him!” and she clung to her mother’s knees with convulsive energy.

“Gertrude, this is madness—it rests with yourself to rid me of that man, I trust for ever—Come, sit down by me, and listen,” and she seated herself at a writing-table, and placed her daughter beside her. After a pause, during which she seemed to be struggling with her feelings, she spoke—

“ Gertrude, I cannot conceal from you that we are both in the power of a villain—I have told you, and I again repeat it; the circumstances which have placed me there I will only disclose with my dying breath, if even then;—how soon that may be depends upon your decision. I can no longer conceal from you that he *does* possess a claim over you—nay, be still, and hear me—which he is ready to relinquish, if, within twenty-four hours, I can raise five hundred pounds—this I must accomplish, or my ruin—your wretchedness for life is inevitable.”

Gertrude began to breathe at this unexpected relief.

“ If he obtains this sum, he has pledged himself to quit the kingdom, and with worlds, if I had them, would I purchase his absence.”

“ But what are those mysterious claims which this man has upon me? why not bring them forward openly?—let them be urged in the face of the world:—in this land of freedom—in my uncle’s house—what have I to fear?”

“ As you value your father’s memory, as you value my peace—my life—let this transaction be for ever buried in silence—if there were a way to

escape—if it were *possible* to release ourselves from him, can you suppose that I would have suffered what I have done,—that I would have submitted thus to humble myself to my own child?”

And Mrs St Clair dropt a few tears.

“ But where is such a sum to be had ?” asked her daughter, as she thought how she had already been stripped of every thing she could call her own. “ I have nothing in my power !”

“ I know you have nothing to give ; but you have only to ask and you will obtain.—My uncle can refuse you nothing ; and it is no such mighty matter in the future Countess of Rossville to borrow a few hundred pounds from a man to whom wealth is an absolute drug.—Here,” said she, placing some paper before her, and putting a pen into her hand, “ you have only to write, and I will dictate.”

But the pen dropt from Gertrude’s fingers.

“ No—I cannot—indeed I cannot be guilty of such meanness—it is too degrading.”

Mrs St Clair made no attempt to argue or remonstrate ; but, waving her hand with a sort of desperate calmness, she merely said,—

“ I am answered—leave me.”

“ Oh ! mama—give me the paper—you shall be obeyed—tell me what I must say.”

Mrs St Clair testified neither joy nor gratitude at this concession ; but immediately began to dictate the form of a letter to Mr Adam Ramsay, which her daughter implicitly followed—scarcely conscious of what she wrote. In a calmer mood, she would have revolted from the duplicity and servility with which every line was fraught ; but, in her present excitement of mind, her powers of thinking were suspended, and she was the mere passive instrument of her mother’s will. At length it was finished ; and, as Mrs St Clair sealed it, she looked at her watch—

“ It will be just in time for the letter-box and no more ; we must return to the drawing-room, and we can put it into the box as we pass through the hall.”

“ I cannot return to the company,” said her daughter. “ I am unfit for society after such a scene as this—I cannot dissemble.”

“ You can, at least, it is to be hoped, exercise some self-control, and not suffer yourself to be read and commented upon by every curious eye

which chooses to look in your face. Happily 'tis one that even crying cannot spoil ; you have only to wipe away your tears," and she applied her own handkerchief ; " and, sec, not a trace of them remains—Come, I insist upon it." And Gertrude suffered herself to be led to the drawing-room.

The only person with whom she now felt any companionship was Mr Lyndsay. There was a sort of protection in his presence which made her like to be near him ; some unknown evil hung over her, from which it seemed as if he only could deliver her ; and when he entered the room and approached her, she welcomed him with the only look of gladness that had brightened her face that day.

Although Mr Lyndsay was pretty well aware of Mrs St Clair's real character, and saw, moreover, that she had some strong motive for wishing to mislead him, still her words had made some little impression upon him. He gave her full credit for her anxiety to detach her daughter from Colonel Delmour ; but he was somewhat sceptical as to her sincerity in wishing to bestow her upon him. He saw that Gertrude loved with

all the delusion of romance, and, like many a young enthusiast, had mistaken her imagination for her mind, and to have saved her from the fatal consequences of such infatuation, he would have made any sacrifice, but his nature was too noble to join in any stratagem. With these feelings he drew near Gertrude, but Mrs St Clair had contrived to get herself and her daughter so built in by Lady Betty, her little table, her large basket, and her fat dog—that it was impossible to engage in a separate conversation. He could only talk to her, therefore, as he leant on the back of her chair, of common topics; but that he did in a manner to render even these amusing and instructive, without being either satirical or pedantic—for he possessed an accurate knowledge of most subjects of science and literature, and, like all really well informed people, he threw out ideas and information without the slightest design of instructing others, or displaying his own acquirements. Insensibly Gertrude became interested in his conversation, and did not observe the entrance of the rest of the gentlemen, till she heard Mr Delmour say, in answer to a question from one of the voters—

“Certainly—we may rely upon Frederick—indeed, he will probably return to Britain in the course of a very few months. It was quite unexpected, I believe, his having to accompany the regiment, as it was at one time settled, that Colonel Brookes was to take the command, and I have never heard it explained why he devolved it upon my brother—but I understand he is to follow immediately, and then unquestionably Frederick will get leave—so we may reckon upon him confidently.”

At the first mention of Colonel Delmour's name, Gertrude had ceased to be conscious of any thing else, and as his brother went on, she scarcely dared to breathe, lest she should lose a syllable of a subject so interesting—her very soul seemed to hang upon his words, insignificant as they were, and when he ended, a deep flush of joy overspread her countenance, and lighted up her eyes.

“He will come then to clear himself from all unjust suspicions!” thought she, and as the transporting thought rushed upon her mind, she raised her eyes beaming with delight to Lyndsay. But they met his fixed upon her with an expression

so grave, so uncongenial with her own, as instantly made her feel how little his sentiments were in unison with her own, and a slight shade of displeasure crossed her face as she turned it away. He said nothing, but left his station, which was soon taken by Mr Delmour, to whose insipid verbiage she listened with sustained interest, in hopes of hearing the subject renewed. But nothing more was said. Mr Lyndsay had disappeared, and the evening wore away in a dull tedious manner.

CHAPTER XIX.

I am not a man of law that has my tongue to sell for silver or favour of the world.

JOHN KNOX.

THE following day, Mrs St Clair was confined to bed with a severe cold and rheumatism, the consequences of her walk the preceding day. All was anxious expectation, on her part and Gertrude's, for the answer from Mr Ramsay ; but the post arrived, and brought only a note from the joyful Lilly announcing the day of her nuptials, and inviting her aunt and cousin to be present at the celebration. As Mr Larkins had no vote, a civil refusal was immediately returned. This disappointment was only a passing knell, as the thought suggested itself that uncle Adam might not think it proper to trust a bill for five hundred pounds to the post, and would most probably send it by a special messenger.

By her mother's desire, Gertrude therefore stationed herself at the window, to watch the arrival of any one likely to be the bearer of the important dispatch. Not Sister Anne herself looked with more wistful eyes, or was oftener called upon to declare what she saw; and when, at length, she descried the identical old red hack-chaise, belonging to the White Bear, rocking up the avenue—not Blue Beard himself, sword in hand, could have caused greater consternation. This was an evil Mrs St Clair had never contemplated—a personal inquiry set on foot by the awful uncle Adam, was an idea too dreadful to have entered into her imagination; and when it was announced that Mr Ramsay wished to see Miss St Clair alone, her agitation was almost too much for her. Although trembling herself, Gertrude yet tried to soothe her mother into calmness; and having again and again assured her that she would not betray her—that she would take the whole responsibility upon herself, she left her to obey the summons. But her heart failed her when she reached the door of the apartment where he was, and she stood some minutes with her hand on the lock ere she had courage to turn

it. At length she entered, but dared not lift her eyes to the cold sour visage, whose influence she felt even without seeing. She tried to say something of trouble and kindness ; but, in the agitation of her mind, she could not put a sentence together—she could only invite him to sit down, and that she did with trepidation. But, instead of complying, Mr Ramsay drew from his pocket an old black leather pocket-book, from which he took Gertrude's letter, and, showing her the superscription, asked—

“ Is that your writing ? ”

“ It is,” answered Gertrude in a voice scarcely articulate.

“ And wi' your ain free will and knowledge ? ”

She could not reply ; but, in silent confusion, bent her head.

“ And you're in want o' five hundred pound ? ”

Gertrude's colour rose to the deepest carnation, while she faintly answered—

“ I am.”

Mr Ramsay gave something betwixt a hem and a groan, as he drew a paper from the very inmost pocket of his venerable repository, and held it

out to her, then suddenly drawing back, and looking sternly upon her, he asked—

“You re no gawn to flee the country?—speak the truth.”

Gertrude felt her very temples glow at this ignominious question, and, without speaking, there was something in her look and gesture which dispelled the old man’s hasty suspicion.

“There s the money then,” said he in a cold bitter tone.

Gertrude involuntarily shrunk from the ungracious-looking hand that was scarcely extended to her.

“Tak’ it,” cried he in a still more angry voice—
“Tak’ it, but you maun tak’ this alang wi’t—I would rather hae parted wi’ five thousand—aye, five times five thousand, than that such a letter should hae come frae you;” and, tearing it in pieces, he threw it into the fire.

“Oh ! do not say so,” cried Gertrude in great emotion, and catching his hand, as he was about to leave the room.

“I maun say what I think—I’m no anc o’ the folk that can say ae thing and think anither—I’m disappointed in you”

“ Yet if you knew—if the circumstances ——”

Mr Ramsay shook his head.

“ Aye, aye—circumstances—that’s aye the cry—but they maun be ill circumstances that need aw this concealment—even frae your ain mother.”

“ The time may perhaps come,” cried Miss St Clair in increasing agitation, “ when I shall be able to convince you that I am not to blame—in the meantime, if you will trust me ——”

“ Dinna think it’s the money I care for,” interrupted Mr Ramsay ; “ I value that five hundred pound nae mair than if it were five hundred chucky-stanes—but I’ll tell you what I valued, I valued you—and I valued your truth—and your openness—and your downrightness—and I’m disappointed in you.”

“ Oh ! do not judge so hardly of me,” cried Gertrude ; “ the time will come when you will think better of me.”

“ The time o’ a man o’ threescore and ten will no be very lang in this world—we’ll maybe meet nae mair—but, before we part, there’s ae thing I maun tell you—Trust me, ye’ll ne’er buy true friends—nor true love—nor true happiness o’ ony

kind wi' money—so beg, and borrow, and spend as you will, but mind my words.”

“Do not—oh ! do not leave me in displeasure,” cried Gertrude bursting into tears, as he was again moving away.

“I feel nae displeasure against you—I am only vexed, and mortified, and disappointed—I had ta'en a liking to you ; but, as the auld sang says,—

“Whene'er you meet a mutual heart,
Gold comes between and makes them part.”

It was gold that parted me frae her that was aw the world to me, and it was a pleeshure to me to like you for being like her—but gold—gold—gold—has parted us next.”

Gertrude had been prepared to stand the burst of uncle Adam's anger ; but there was something in his querulous sorrow that went to her heart. There is, indeed, a feeling inexpressibly painful in adding to the afflictions of the aged, and heaping fresh sorrows upon the hoary head—many a bitter drop must they, even the most prosperous, have drank in the course of their long and weary pilgrimage, and woe be to the hand which would

willingly pour fresh gall into the very dregs of their cup !

Some thought such as this filled Gertrude's heart, even to overflowing.

“ My dear kind uncle ! ” cried she as she again seized his hand, and even pressed it to her lips with reverence, while her tears dropped upon it ; “ Oh ! that you could read my heart ! ”

Mr Ramsay, like all caustic people, thought it necessary to be more severe. as he felt himself getting soft.

“ It might soon be better worth reading than your letter—but there need be nae mair, said about it—let byganes be byganes.”

“ But can you—will you forgive me ? ”

“ I hae naething to forgi'e—I tell you I value the money nae mair than the dirt beneath my feet—but I'm vexed—I'm mortified that you should hae brought yoursel' to such straits already.”

“ At least, in mercy, suspend your judgment.”

“ That's impossible—suspend my judgment ! that's aye o' your fashionable phrases—you seem to think a man can suspend his judgment as he would hing up his hat !—I canna help judging o'

what comes to my ain knowledge, and I judge that, for a bairn like you to want five hunder pound, without the knowledge o' your ain mother, or ony relation you hae—canna be right—it's no possible—I maun be a born idiot if I'm no fit to judge o' that; and your letter!—I wad rather hae scrapit the mool for my bread, as I wad hae bleckit paper to beg for siller."

And taking up his little old bare shapeless beaver, he was moving away. Gertrude saw with grief it was in vain to attempt to clear herself in Mr Ramsay's eyes; he was evidently no less displeased at the demand, than disgusted by the manner in which it had been made; indeed, in proportion as he despised money himself, so he seemed to despise those who set any value upon it, and while he literally looked upon his purse as trash, nothing enraged him so much as a direct attack upon it.

"I am very unhappy at having lost your good opinion," said Gertrude, in a tone of deep dejection—"but nothing shall ever make me forget your kindness, my dear—dear uncle—may God bless you!"

Mr Ramsay made no reply—his heart yearned

to the image of his beloved Lizzie, and he was on the point—not of taking her to his breast, for that was a weakness he would have blushed at even in thought, but of holding out his cold blue jointless hand, and of according his forgiveness. He, however, checked himself as he thought of the magnitude of the offence, and the encouragement it would be giving to that, in his estimation, the most heinous of all offences—extravagance. With a sort of repressed “Weel—weel!” and a small wave of his hand, he, therefore, moved on without betraying his emotion, and seated himself in his old chaise, satisfied that he had done his duty in discountenancing vice by being as disagreeable as possible.

How rarely can we judge of people’s hearts by their manners, and how seldom do we see “the manner suited to the action, except in skilful actors, or untaught children! How many a soft smile covers an unkind deed—while it sometimes happens that we meet with acts of friendship from those who would be ready to “bandy words with us as a dog.” But how much is it to be regretted, when charity and good-will thus assume the garb of enmity, and when kind-hearted people convey

their admonitions in a manner calculated to make us dislike the reprover, even while we admit the justice of the reproof !

On the present occasion, Mr Ramsay's roughness and asperity produced no corresponding emotions in Gertrude's gentle heart. She felt only regret and sorrow at having been the means of embittering the scanty measure of the old man's enjoyment, and of having, she feared, forever forfeited his good opinion and affection.

CHAPTER XX.

Qu'un ami veritable est une douce chose !

LA FONTAINE.

BUT Mrs St Clair was in no mood to sympathize in the nature of her daughter's distress, as her own joy at receiving the money seemed to absorb every other consideration.

“ There is still something for you to do, Gertrude, love,” said she ; “ I had promised to have some conversation with Mr Lyndsay to-day ; but you see my situation, and how unfit I am for such an exertion. You will therefore represent it to him, and, at the same time, convey to him my determination to meet him to-morrow *coute qu'il coute* ;” then, reading surprise in her daughter's countenance, she added, in a solemn tone, “ Gertrude, whatever has appeared strange and mysterious in my conduct towards you, I am now going to confide to him—will that satisfy you ?”

“ Is it possible !” exclaimed Miss St Clair, in an accent of astonishment and pleasure ; “ then, I am sure, all will be right.”

“ Mr Lyndsay appears to have made very rapid strides in your good graces,” said her mother, with a look of displeasure. “ Yesterday you seemed to me to be scarcely upon speaking terms.—Well, although I am no great admirer, scarcely a believer, in Platonics in general—yet there may be exceptions where there is Methodism in the case—you may therefore indulge in a sentimental religious flirtation if you will, though I must always think a daughter’s best friend must be her mother ; at any rate, she will be cautious how she talks of her mother, and suffers others to do it—you have simply to deliver my message, and beware of all comments. Now give me my writing materials—light that taper, and leave me.”

Accustomed as she was to her mother’s crooked policy even in the merest trifles, Gertrude’s mind misgave her that something very false lay at the bottom of this pretended confidence ; and she could not repress the painful suspicion, that it was all a scheme to dupe him and deceive her. She, however, sought her cousin for the purpose

of delivering her message ; but it was not without embarrassment she repeated it ; and she thought she read doubt and distrust in the manner in which he received it. Without expressing their mutual thoughts, both felt that sort of intuitive knowledge of what was passing in each other's mind, which needed not the aid of words to impart. Nothing could be said, indeed, to serve any purpose, beyond that of mere speculation and conjecture, and although to many a mind there is nothing more delightful than that sort of *guess-gossip*, yet Mr Lyndsay's rose superior to any such petty enjoyment, and he rather sought to divert Gertrude's from dwelling on so disagreeable a subject.

To-morrow came as to-morrow hitherto has done, but, as is equally common, to-morrow fulfilled not the hopes of yesterday. Mrs St Clair's malady had assumed a more serious aspect. A physician was called in, who pronounced her disorder to be an acute rheumatic and nervous fever, which, though not of a malignant nature, was likely to prove severe and tedious in its operation. Here could be no deception, and as Gertrude was almost wholly confined to her mother's

apartment, Mr Lyndsay felt his presence was useless, and, therefore, resolved on returning home. But, before he went, he sought an interview with Miss St Clair.

“ I flattered myself,” said he, “ that before I lost sight of you again, I should at least have had the satisfaction of knowing the nature of the evils you are exposed to—but Mrs St Clair’s situation puts an end to that hope for the present. I trust I leave you in safety, and I shall not stay long away—but if, in my absence, any thing should occur to alarm you, promise that you will write to me instantly.” Seeing her hesitate, he quickly added, “ I am not seeking to engage you in any clandestine correspondence. I abhor all concealment as much as you can do, but—must I say it?—you require a protector.”

“ I have my mother—my uncle,” said she, faintly, for she felt that her lips belied her when she named her mother, and she shrunk from the idea of appealing to her uncle ; “ and, besides,” added she, “ I have mama’s solemn assurance, that this person has left Scotland, probably for ever ;” but the manner in which she said this showed how little reliance she placed on this as-

“ I cannot to you say what I think,” said Mr Lyndsay ; “ but will you then promise, if ever you have the slightest reason to suppose you are again to encounter the insolence of that man—” and Lyndsay’s soft mild eyes flashed fire as he spoke, “ promise me, then, that you will instantly claim Lord Rossville’s protection.”

But Gertrude dared not promise, and she remained silent.

“ As it is,” continued he, “ I scarcely know whether I am justified in withholding from him what I have witnessed——”

“ Oh ! do not—dear Mr Lyndsay, do not, I beseech you, breathe a syllable of what has passed to Lord Rossville, or any one else—for my sake, do not——”

“ For your sake I would do much—well, then, you give me your word——”

“ Do not urge me—why should you involve yourself in trouble—perhaps in danger—for me ?—already you have risked your life to save mine—No, leave me to my fate, whatever it is.”

“ I hate the word fate,” said Lyndsay ; “ like chance, it is ‘ a word easily pronounced, but nothing more ;’ so I shall not leave you to any thing

so vague and mystical. As for me, I am no duelist, and, besides, this person scarcely appears to be of that rank in society, which would, what is called, entitle him to such satisfaction. Be assured, therefore, you will find me a bloodless champion—but without some assurance from you, I will not leave you unprotected.”

Gertrude gave him her hand—

“ My dear, generous cousin !” said she, much affected by the interest he showed for her, “ I promise, that if ever I am again in difficulty, and can have recourse to your assistance, I will—more I cannot—I dare not promise.”

“ Then, with that I must be satisfied—look upon me as your friend, my dear cousin, and let us leave the rest to Heaven—Farewell !”

Lyndsay’s absence caused a blank to Gertrude, which she in vain tried to fill up—for, to an affectionate heart and refined taste, what can supply the want of that social intercourse, which is the very aliment of the soul ? Nothing could be more *triste* than this state of existence. The only varieties she experienced were in the querulous complaints of her mother—the verbose harangues of Lord Rossville—the senseless questions of Lady

Betty—and the twice told compliments of Mr Delmour.

“ Is this life ?” sighed she—“ Ah ! how different from what I had pictured it to myself—‘ and thus I am absorbed, and this is life !’ ”

But Gertrude only felt what all persons of acute sensibility have felt in similar situations, that “ to be no part of any body, is as to be nothing.”

CHAPTER XXI.

Avaunt ! and quit my sight !—let the earth hide thee !

Macbeth.

THE dreary monotony of a snow storm now reigned in all its morbid solemnity. All nature was shrouded in one common covering—neither heavens nor earth offered any variety to the wearied sight—any sound to the listening ear. All was sameness and stillness—'twas as the pulse of life stood still—of time congealed ; or if a sound perchance broke the dreary silence that reigned, it fell with that dull muffled tone, which only denoted the still burdened atmosphere.

Nothing can be more desolate and depressing than this exterior of nature to those who, assembled under one roof, are yet strangers to those fire-side enjoyments—that home-born happiness which springs from social intercourse. Here were no intimate delights—no play of fancy—no plea-

sures to deceive the hours and embellish existence. Here was nothing to palliate dulness—nothing to give time a zest—nothing to fill the void of an unfurnished brain. There was stupor of mind, without tranquillity of soul—restlessness of body, without animation of spirit. Gertrude felt her heart droop beneath the oppressive gloom which surrounded her, and thought even actual suffering must be preferable to this total stagnation of all enjoyment. But,

——“All human things a day
In darkness sinks—a day to light restores.”

It was drawing towards the close of a day, when the snow had fallen without intermission, but was now beginning to abate. Lord Rossville stood at his drawing-room window speculating on the aspect of the clouds, and predicting a change of weather, when he suddenly uttered an exclamation, which attracted the whole of the family to where he stood.

A huge black object was dimly discernible entering the avenue, and dragging its ponderous length towards the Castle; but what was its precise nature, the still falling snow prevented their

ascertaining. But suddenly the snow ceased—the clouds rolled away—and a red brassy glare of the setting sun fell abruptly on this moving phenomena, and disclosed to view a stately full-plumed hearse. There was something so terrific, yet so picturesque, in its appearance, as it ploughed its way through waves of snow—its sable plumes, and gilded skulls, nodding and grinning in the now livid glimmering of the fast-sinking sun—that all stood transfixed with alarm and amazement. At length the prodigy drew near, followed by two attendants on horseback ; it drew up at the grand entrance—the servants gathered round—one of the men began to remove the end-board, that threshold of death ——

“ This is—is—” gasped the Earl, as he tried to throw open the window and call to his servants ; but the window was frozen, and, ere his Lordship could adopt another expedient, his fury was turned from the dead to the living, for there was lifted out—not “ a slovenly unhandsome corpse, betwixt the wind and his nobility,” but the warm, sentient, though somewhat discomfited, figure of Miss Pratt. All uttered some characteristic exclamation ; but Lord Rossville’s

tongue clove to the very roof of his mouth, and he, in vain, laboured to find words suited to the occasion.

Whether the contents of the hearse should be permitted to enter his castle walls from such a conveyance was a doubt in itself so weighty, as for the moment to overpower every faculty of mind and body. True, to refuse admission to one of the blood of Rossville—a cousin to himself—the cousin of many noble families—the aunt of Mr Whyte of Whyte-Hall—would be a strong measure. Yet to sanction such a violation of all propriety!—to suffer such an example of disrespect to the living—of decorum to the dead!—to receive into his presence a person just issued from a hearse!—Who could tell what distempers she might not bring in her train! That thought decided the matter—His Lordship turned round to pull the bell, and, in doing so, found both hands locked in those of Miss Pratt! The shock of a man-trap is probably faint compared to that which he experienced at finding himself in the grasp of the fair, and all powers of resistance failed under the energy of her hearty shake.

“ Well, my Lord, what do you think of my

travelling equipage?—My Jerusalem dilly, as Anthony Whyte calls it?—’Pon my word, you must make much of me—for a pretty business I’ve had to get here. I may well say I’ve come through thick and thin to get to you. At one time, I assure you, I thought you would never have seen me but in my coffin—and a great mercy it is it’s only in a hearse. I fancy I’m the first that ever thought themselves in luck to get into one ; but, however, I think I’m still luckier in having got well out of it—ha ! ha ! ha !”

“ Miss Pratt !” heaved the Earl as with a lever.

“ Well, you shall hear all about it by-and-bye. In the meantime, I must beg the favour of you to let the men put up their hearse and horses for the night—for it’s perfectly impossible for them to go a step farther—and, indeed, I promised, that if they would but bring me safe here, you would make them all welcome to a night’s lodging, poor creatures !”

This was a pitch of assurance so far beyond any thing Lord Rossville had ever contemplated, that his words felt like stones in his throat, and he strove, but strove in vain, to get them up, and

hurl them at Pratt's audacious jaws. Indeed, all ordinary words and known language would have been inadequate for his purpose. Only some mighty terror-compelling compound, or some magical anathema—something which would have caused her to sink into the ground—or have made her quit the form of a woman, and take that of an insect, would have spoke the feelings of his breast. While his Lordship was thus struggling, like one under the influence of the night-mare, for utterance, Miss Pratt called to one of the servants who just then entered—

“ Jackson, you'll be so good as see these men we'll taken care off—and I hope Bishop will allow a good feed to the horses, poor beasts ! and——”

“ Miss Pratt !” at length bolted the Earl—
“ Miss Pratt, this conduct of yours is of so extraordinary—so altogether unparalleled a nature, that——”

“ You may well say that, my Lord—unparalleled, indeed, if you knew all.”

“ There's eight horses and four men,” said Lady Betty, who had been pleasing her fancy by counting them.—“ Who's burial is it ?”

“ It’s Mr M‘Vitae’s, the great distiller.—I’m sure, I’m much obliged to him—for if it hadn’t been for him, poor man ! I might have been stiff and stark by this time.” And Miss Pratt busied herself in taking off her snow-shoes, and turning and chafing herself before the fire.

“ Miss Pratt,” again began the Earl, mustering all his energies—“ Miss Pratt, it is altogether inconceivable and inexplicable to me, how you, or any one else, could possibly so far forget what was due to themselves and me, as to come to my house in a manner so wholly unprecedented, so altogether unwarrantable, so—so—so perfectly unjustifiable—I say, how any person or persons could thus presume——”

A burst of laughter from Miss Pratt here broke in upon the Earl’s harangue.

“ My dear Lord Rossville, I beg your pardon ; but really the notion of my *presuming* to come in a hearse is too good—’Pon my word, it’s a piece of presumption few people would be guilty of if they could help it. I assure you I felt humble enough when I was glad to creep into it.”

“ I repeat *presume*, Miss Pratt,” cried his

Lordship, now fairly kindled into eloquence, “to presume to bring to my house an equipage and attendants of—of—of the most luctiferous description—and farther, to presume to expect that I am to permit the hearse of Mr M‘Vitae, the distiller—the—the democratic distiller, with eight horses and four men, to—to—to—to—to transform Rossville Castle into an inn—a—a caravansera of the very lowest description—a—a—a charnel-house—a—a—a receptacle for vehicles employed for the foulest—the vilest—the—the most unseemly of all purposes! Jackson, desire those people, with their carriage and horses, to quit my grounds without one moment’s delay.”

“My dear Lord Rossville!—(Stop Jackson)—Bless my heart! you’re not going to turn away the people at this time of night!—Only look how it’s snowing, and the sky as black as pitch—there’s neither man nor beast fit to travel a-foot this night. Jackson, I’m sure you must be sensible that it’s perfectly impossible for them to find their way now.”

Jackson, who had, like his betters, felt considerable *ennui* during the storm, and rather rejoiced at the thoughts of any visitors, however in-

ferior to himself in rank and station, confirmed the assertion with all due respect—but to little purpose.

“At all events, and whatever may be the consequence,” said his master, “they certainly can, and, indeed, positively must, return by the road which they have recently traversed.”

“They may just as well attempt to fly as to go back the way they came—a pretty fight they had to get through! I only wish you had seen it—the horses up to their shoulders more than once in the snow, even then, and it’s now snowing ten times worse than ever—so I leave you to judge how they are to drag a hearse back nine miles at this time of night.”

Here Jackson re-entered with a manifesto from the hearse-drivers and company, stating, that they had been brought two miles and a half out of their way under promise of being provided in quarters for the night, and that it was now impossible for them to proceed.

“It will be a pretty story if I’m landed in a law-suit,” cried Miss Pratt, in great alarm, as the Earl was about to reiterate his orders; “and it

will make a fine noise in the county I can tell you."

Mr Delmour, who had been out investigating matters, here struck in, and having remarked that it might be an unpopular measure, recommended that Mr M'Vitae's suite should be accommodated for the night, with strict charges to depart by dawn the following morning ; and the Earl, though with great reluctance, was prevailed upon to agree to this arrangement.

CHAPTER XXII.

Our life is but a pilgrimage of blasts,
And every blast brings forth a fear,
And ev'ry fear a death.

QUARLES.

MISS PRATT having carried her point, and dried, warmed, fed, and cherished her person in all possible ways, now commenced the narrative of what she called her unparalleled adventures. But as has been truly said, there are always two ways of telling a story, and Miss Pratt's biographer and herself are by no means at one as to the motives which led to this extraordinary expedition. Miss Pratt set forth that she had been living most comfortably at Skinflint Cottage, where she had been most kindly treated, and much pressed to prolong her visit; but she had taken an anxious fit about her good friends at Rossville,—she had had a great dreaming about them the night before last, and she could not rest till she

had seen them all. She had, therefore, borrowed the Skinflint carriage, and set out at the risk of her life—but the horses had stuck in the snow, &c. &c. &c.

Miss Pratt's biographer, on the other hand, asserts that Miss Pratt, in the course of circulation, had landed at Skinflint Cottage, which she sometimes used as a stepping-stone, but never as a resting-place; here, however, she had been taken prisoner by the snow-storm, and confined for a week in a small house full of children—some in measles—some in scarlet fevers—some in whooping-coughs—the only healthy individuals, two strong unruly boys just broke loose from school for the holidays. The fare was bad—her bed was hard—her blankets heavy—her pillows few—her curtains thin—and her room, which was next to the nursery, to use her own expression, smoked like a killogic.

To sum up the whole, it was a retreat of Miss Becky Duguid's, and at this very time Miss Becky was in such requisition, that it was resolved to send the carriage for her—in the double hope, that, as Rossville Castle was in the way, their guest would avail herself of the opportunity

of taking her departure. Accordingly, a pair of old, stiff, starved, superannuated horses were yoked to a large, heavy family coach, to which Miss Pratt joyfully betook herself even in the very teeth of the storm. But the case was a desperate one, for she had received several broad hints about one of the children in the hooping-cough, Charles Fox, by name—having taken a fancy to sleep with her, in consequence of her having, in an unwary fit of generosity, presented it with a peppermint drop. But all these minute particulars Miss Pratt passed over, which occasions some little discrepancy betwixt herself and her faithful biographer, but from this point they can now proceed hand in hand.

The old horses tugged their way through the snow most manfully, till they came to Cockle-stonetop Muir, and there it lay so deep as to baffle their utmost exertions. After every other alternative had been tried in vain, there remained no other than to leave the carriage, and for Miss Pratt, her ^{small} green bag, and the coachman, to mount the horses, and proceed to the nearest habitation. But the snow fell thick and fast—Miss Pratt could not keep her seat on the bare back of a huge,

stiff, plough-horse, whose every movement threatened dislocation, if not dissolution, and even her dauntless spirit was sinking beneath the horrors of her situation, when, as she expressed it, by mere dint of good luck, up came Mr M'Vitae's hearse, drawn by six stout horses, who had been living, for the last two days, at heck and manger in Mr M'Vitae's well-filled stables. After a little parley, and many promises, they were induced, nothing loath indeed, to turn out of the way, and deposit Miss Pratt and her bag at Rossville Castle.

But even this account failed to still the tumult in the Earl's breast—there was something in having a hearse, and the hearse of Mr M'Vitae, the radical distiller, thus forced within his walls, he could not away with. Death, even in its most dignified attitude, with all its proudest trophies, would still have been an appalling spectacle to Lord Rossville ; but, in its present vulgar and almost burlesque form, it was altogether insupportable. Death is indeed an awful thing, whatever aspect it assumes. The King of Terrors gives to other attributes their power of terrifying : the thunder's roar—the lightning's flash—the billow's roar—the earthquake's shock—all derive

their dread sublimity from Death. All are but the instruments of his resistless sway.

From these, and even from his more ordinary emissaries, Lord Rossville felt secure ; but still a lurking fear had taken possession of his mind, and he could not divest himself of the train of ideas, which had been excited by beholding, in horrid array, Death's cavalcade approach his dwelling. He passed a restless night—he thought of what the county would say, and what he should say to the county—he thought of, whether he would not be justified in banishing Miss Pratt for ever from his presence. When the first faint grey streak of light appeared, he rang his bell to inquire whether the funeral procession had departed—but a fresh fall of snow, during the night, had placed the castle and hearse in a complete state of blockade. He rose and opened the window to ascertain the fact, but nothing was to be seen but a fast-falling, blinding snow—he next went to the door, but there the snow lay six feet deep—he returned to bed, but not to sleep—and when his servant entered in the morning, he found his master a lifeless corse.

Whence it came, who can tell? Whether from cold, mental disquiet, or irreversible decree?

“ When hour of death is come, let none ask whence nor why !”

CHAPTER XXIII.

And feel I, Death, no joy from thought of thee ?

YOUNG.

GERTRUDE was now Countess of Rossville, and how often had her heart bounded at the anticipation ! How slight a thing seems the life or death of an individual, to whom we are united by no ties of affection, when merely thought of, as to be or not to be, and Death and his awful attributes are not made manifest to our senses. But how sad and solemn, when we come to witness, even in those most alien to us, the last struggle—the dread change—the total extinction of mortality !

As the youthful Countess looked on her uncle's cold remains she forgot all her dreams of vanity, and wept in real sadness, as she thought how many a painful emotion of anger and disappointment she had excited in that now still, unconscious, form.

Oh! how bitter are the upbraidings which come to us from the lips of the dead! Would that the living could lay the too tardy reflection to heart!

Gertrude could not blame herself, but she sorrowed in the sorrow of a warm ingenuous heart, that she should ever have offended the pale and peaceful image now stretched before her. But tears, though shed in earnest, are, alas! often shed in vain.

“As from the wing no scar the sky retains,
The parted wave no furrow from the keel;
So dies in human hearts the thought of death,”

when that thought is not embalmed by affection.

The funeral obsequies were celebrated with a pomp of heraldry—a display of solemn state, which would, if aught on earth could, have brightened the dull cold eye of the dead to have witnessed.

The Earl had left no settlements—he had destroyed his original ones, and been planning others of a totally different nature, which, had he lived, would certainly have been put in execution, to the utter exclusion of Lady Rossville, unless as the wife of Mr Delmour.

Gertrude wished for nothing more ardently, than for an opportunity of coming to an explanation with that gentleman, and at once putting an end to the delusion under which he evidently laboured. But there was so much formal politeness—so little of the energy of passion, in his addresses, that she felt it would be like anticipating were she to appear to look upon him in the light of a lover.

She was, therefore, obliged to endure the annoyance of his little punctilious assiduities, which, though for ever claiming her notice, were yet too vapid and insignificant either to please or offend—they were merely flat, stale, and unprofitable. From these she was soon, however, unexpectedly released. A few days after the Earl's funeral, an express arrived with the intelligence of the death of his cousin, the Marquis of Haslingden—he had died of the breaking of a blood-vessel, and, in so doing, had rendered Mr Delmour presumptive heir to the dukedom. As his presence was now required in the south, he immediately set about preparations for his departure; but, previous to setting off, he sought an interview with Lady Rossville, for the purpose of expressing his regret

at being under the necessity of leaving her at such a time, and his assurances of returning as speedily as the nature of the mournful circumstances, under which he was called away, would permit—concluding with the hope, that, whenever propriety sanctioned the fulfilling of his late lamented uncle's intentions, his fair cousin would at once testify her respect for the wishes of the dead, and complete the happiness of the living. However much Gertrude had longed for this opportunity, she now felt, as every delicate mind must feel in a similar situation, that 'tis a nervous and a painful thing to tell a person face to face,

“ I don't like you, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell ;
But I don't like you, Doctor Fell ;”

for, however it may be expressed, that is generally the substance of a refusal. The words must be rendered, however, in some shape or other, and, collecting herself, she, with that self-possession which, in such cases, speaks even plainer than words, expressed her regret at the misunderstanding that had so long been allowed to exist—assured him, that the Earl had been perfectly aware of her sentiments—they were such as made

it impossible she ever could do honour to her uncle's intentions. Politician as he was, Mr Delmour could not conceal the surprise and pique with which he received this communication. He had all along been led to consider his union with the heiress of Rossville as a settled point—he had, therefore, looked upon her as his destined bride—fortunately, a very beautiful, charming, elegant girl, to whom it was his part to be more than usually polite and attentive—and now, at the very moment when he had extended his hand to seize the prize, like a second Ixion, he found he had grasped a cloud. But whatever were his feelings on the occasion, he had too much pride to express any thing beyond mere surprise at the very awkward and unaccountable misapprehension which had thus involved both parties in so unpleasant a dilemma. He certainly could not accuse Gertrude of having varied with the circumstances of her fortune—since his own was now, to all appearance, much more brilliant than at the commencement of their acquaintance ; but it was evident he thought himself extremely ill-used by her, and, therefore, took a very distant and stately farewell.

When informed of Mr Delmour's dismissal, Mrs St Clair's indignation against her daughter was no less violent than unaccountable.

"You were born to be my ruin!" was her first exclamation—"To refuse, situated as you are, an alliance that would have secured you against the possibility of —— You know not what you have done—infatuated that you are!"—And she paced the chamber with a disordered mien, while Gertrude, too much accustomed to her mother's wayward moods to attach any peculiar meaning to her words, in silence allowed the storm to take its course. But, as is commonly the case with unjust displeasure, it took such a wide range, and branched out into so many ramifications of anger and invective, that labour dire and weary woe it would be to attempt to follow her through all the labyrinths of her ill-humour. Mrs St Clair was, indeed, a riddle hard to solve. Although not quite so hypocritical as to pretend to be inconsolable at the death of the Earl, yet, certain it was, that event had agitated her in no common manner or degree. And her daughter's exaltation, which, for so many years, had been the sole object of her ambition, seemed,

now that it was obtained, to have lost all its value in her eyes—the only visible effect it had yet produced, had been to render her more than ever violent, irritable, and capricious. She still kept her own apartment—refused to see any body on the plea of her health—was restless and dissatisfied—and, in short, showed all the symptoms of a mind ill at ease.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Love !

There is no spirit under Heav'n that works
With such delusion.

BEN JONSON.

THE want of a will is a desideratum which invariably causes disappointment to many an expectant. Perhaps, on the late occasion, no one felt more chagrined at the failure of the Earl's than Miss Pratt. Although there was little difference in their ages, yet, from being of a lighter and more active nature, she had always looked upon herself as at least twenty years younger, and had all along settled in her own mind that he was to die long before her ; and from having at first contemplated the possibility of his leaving her a small legacy, she had next considered it as highly probable that he would leave her something very handsome, and, at length, all her

doubts had resolved themselves into the absolute certainty of his doing something highly to his own credit. Not, to do her justice, that she looked to it so much for her own aggrandizement, as for something to bequeath to Anthony Whyte in his necessities ; as she declared, that, in these times, Anthony found he was pinched enough with his three thousand a-year.

Miss Pratt could not, therefore, reconcile herself to this desideratum ; but spent her days in rummaging the house, and expressing her amazement (which, far from lessening, seemed daily to increase) that the will—for a will there must be—should be missing, and her nights in dreaming that the will had been found. The will, she was certain, would cast up yet—nobody knew poor Lord Rossville better than she did—she might say, they had been like brother and sister all their lives ; and nobody that knew him—worthy, well-meaning man that he was !—could ever believe that he would go out of the world, and leave things all at sixes and sevens.—Not so much as ten guineas even, for a mourning ring to his oldest friends and nearest relations—the thing was quite impossible. She only wished she had access

to his repositories, she was sure she would soon bring something to light—some bit paper, or letter, or jotting, or something or another, just to show what his intentions were ; and she was sure Lady Rossville would willingly act up to it, whatever it was—for he was a just, upright, friendly, liberal, well-principled, well-meaning, kind-hearted man—an honourable-minded man, with a great deal of strong natural affection—a man that had always, and upon all occasions, shown himself her steady friend and well-wisher, &c. &c. &c. There was one drawer in particular, the right-hand drawer of his writing-table, the end next the window—she had several times, when she had occasion to speak to him in his study, found him busy there.—Poor man—the very last time she saw him there, he was working amongst some papers in that very drawer—She wondered if it had been well searched, and so on.

Gertrude had no doubt but that due search had been made there as in other places, by the constituted authorities—and she had too much respect for the late Earl's feelings when living, to suffer Miss Pratt to invade his repositories, now that he was dead ;—but weary of hearing the

same changes rung upon this drawer, she one day suddenly resolved to examine it, and some other of her uncle's private repositories. For that purpose, she repaired to his apartment and began her scrutiny. It was with a feeling of solemnity she displaced the relics of the departed, and sought in vain for any indication of his will or intentions—nothing of the kind was to be seen, for nothing of the kind was in existence—only bundles of bills, and packets of letters, were contained in the drawer, which Miss Pratt had vainly flattered herself held her future fortunes. The Countess was about to close it, when her eye was arrested by one of those packets—it was titled, “Correspondence with Colonel F. Delmour—Private—No. 1.”

“Can this be the correspondence,” thought she, “on which the happiness of my life depends?” and her colour ebbed and flowed as the contending emotions of hope and fear rushed over her heart. “And am I justified in thus stealing on the secrets of the dead—is it right—is it honourable?” she paused—“Yet my all of happiness is at stake—why should I hesitate?” And with a trembling hand she unfolded the

copy of a letter from Lord Rossville, written, it seemed, on his first discovering the attachment that existed. It was very angry and very wordy, and the substance of it was calling upon his nephew instantly to resign all pretensions to Miss St Clair's hand, and to authorize him to annul any engagement subsisting between them, upon pain of his most serious displeasure. Gertrude's heart throbbed violently as she turned to the answer to this, in the well known careless elegant hand of her lover. It was short—expressed the deepest regret at having incurred his uncle's displeasure—pleaded the excess of his passion as the only excuse, and declared, in the most unequivocal terms, the utter impossibility there was in his ever complying with his Lordship's commands by relinquishing that which was dearer to him than life.

Tears of delight burst from Gertrude's eyes as she read this decided avowal of unalterable attachment.

“How could I be so base as ever to doubt—ungenerous that I am!” was her first exclamation; and, in the exultation of the moment, she felt as though worlds could never again for a mo-

ment shake her faith. But there were more letters to peruse. The next in order was another from Lord Rossville. It was in part a repetition of what her uncle had said to herself, when he declared his intention of disinheriting her, and settling the estates upon Mr Delmour ; but his resolutions were still more strongly expressed and fully detailed in the letter ; and he concluded by an offer of instantly liquidating his nephew's debts, and settling ten thousand pounds upon him, provided he would come under an engagement never to marry Miss St Clair.

“ This, then, is the test !” thought Gertrude ; and, with a beating heart, she opened another letter in Colonel Delmour's hand-writing, and read as follows :—

“ MY DEAR UNCLE,

“ IT was only on my return here late last night that I found your letter ; and I have passed a sleepless night ruminating on the heart-rending alternative you offer to me. Were my own interests solely at stake, I should not hesitate a single moment ;—but the thought of reducing the adored object of my affections

to poverty—of being the means of bereaving her of the possessions of her ancestors, and depriving her of your favour, is so overwhelming, that I find myself quite unable to come to any conclusion at present. Heaven knows how much I could endure for her sake ; but it is torture to me, to think of her sacrificing so much for mine. Yet, to resign her for ever is distraction. I repeat, it is impossible for me, all at once, to resolve upon a point, on which the happiness of my life is at issue. Pray, allow me a few days to form my resolution, and believe it is my most earnest wish to gratify you in all possible ways. The regiment is on the point of embarking for Gibraltar, but I expect Brookes to take the command, and that I shall obtain leave to remain at home for the present. You shall hear from me again whenever I can summon resolution to *cast the die*. Meantime, you will, of course, suspend all farther proceedings. Believe me,

“ My Dear Uncle,

“ Yours with the sincerest esteem and affection,

“ F. M. H. DELMOUR.

“ P. S.—You may rely upon my secrecy, and I agree with you, that it is better George should not be made acquainted with what has passed—at present.”

Here was “ confirmation, strong as proofs of holy writ,” to the generous, confiding heart of the Countess.

Yes ! it was upon her account that he hesitated—it was for her happiness that he was tempted to sacrifice his own—Ah ! how little did he know her if he deemed that wealth and grandeur could ever stand in competition with his affection—*that*, the peculiar treasure of her soul—that, the pearl of great price—the rest, was it not all mere earthly dross ? Without that, what were rank and fortune to her ? But to share them—to bestow them upon the chosen of her heart, was, indeed, a blissful privilege ! And the whole tenor of her mind became bright as—

“ The first blush of the sun-gilded air.”

Impatient to vindicate the honour of her lover, she hastened to her mother’s apartment. She found Mrs St Clair in the same posture in which she had so frequently observed her since the Earl’s

death—seated at a writing-table—her head resting on one hand—a pen in the other, as if meditating how to begin a letter, which, after all this preparation, did not appear yet to have been commenced.

With cheeks glowing, and eyes sparkling with triumph and delight, Gertrude placed the packet in her hands.

“Read these, mama,” said she in a tone of exultation—“and if ever you had a doubt—surely these must satisfy you.”

Mrs St Clair took the letters, and read them in silence—then, as she folded up the last, she said with a sarcastic smile—

“My doubts are, indeed, ended—I am now confirmed in what I have all along suspected; Colonel Delmour loved you from the first, as the heir-ess of Rossville—as the Countess of Rossville I have no doubt he will adore you.”

Gertrude was struck dumb—her mother went on—

“It is evident to me—it would be to any one in their senses—that the only struggle here is caused by self-interest. He, like many other people, doubted whether Lord Rossville really possessed the power of disinheriting you; and he,

therefore, prudently evades the question, until he has ascertained that point. It would have been selling his right, indeed, for a mess of pottage, to have resigned the heiress to twenty thousand a-year, for a paltry ten thousand pounds, and the payment of his tailor's bill—but, on the other hand ——”

“It is enough,” said Lady Rossville, as, with a burning cheek, and in a tone of wounded feeling, she collected the letters, and was turning to leave the room.

“No, Gertrude, it is not enough,” cried her mother, pointing to her to be seated; “sit down, and listen to me, at least with calmness, if not with respect—I will not be interrupted—I will be heard.”

Her daughter seated herself in silence, but evidently struggling with her feelings.

“I cannot see you as I do, the dupe of an artful unprincipled man, without making an effort to open your eyes to the dangers of your situation—yet I own, I almost despair when I behold you thus wilfully closing them against the light, which would carry conviction to any mind that was not the slave of its own delusions—

yes, I repeat, it is clear as noonday, that it is solely as the heiress of Rossville you are the object of Colonel Delmour's attachment. *He* hesitate about reducing the adored object of his affections to poverty!—*he* distracted at the thoughts of bereaving her of the possessions of her ancestors!—stuff—who that knows any thing of the character of the man, would, for an instant, believe that he would hesitate about sacrificing the whole world, were it to promote his own interest? Gertrude, I would not unnecessarily pain you, but I consider it my duty to save you from the snares I see set for you.—Why should you distrust me?—What interest can I have in deceiving you, my child?"

"I know not—I cannot tell," said the Countess with a sigh; "if I *am* distrustful ——"

She stopped, but Mrs St Clair felt the reproach implied in her look and accent.

"'Tis I who have made you so, you would say—yet you can distrust me, your guide—your companion—your friend—your mother!" Mrs St Clair's voice here faltered with emotion; "although you cannot even doubt the faith of one,

who, but a few months since, was an utter stranger to you."

"But in those few months, what have I not learnt?" said Lady Rossville in much agitation; "enough to make me sometimes doubt the evidence of my own senses—certainly enough to teach me to distrust even my own mother."

Mrs St Clair's face crimsoned.

"Beware how you provoke me, Gertrude!" cried she with much vehemence; "I will endure no taunts or reproaches from you, for, with one word, I could lay all your romantic dreams in the dust. Although, as Countess of Rossville, you may wish to forget what is due to me as your mother—I will *not* relinquish my claims to you as my daughter.—I *will* be obeyed!" continued she with increasing violence, "and I command you from henceforth to think of that man no more."

"Then you command me to do what is impossible," said the Countess, giving way to tears. "Oh! mama! why will you force me to this alternative? Why must I be accounted rebellious—undutiful—because I cannot see as you see, and think as you think? I call Heaven to wit-

ness, I would ever render to you the respect—the reverence of a child, but I cannot—no, I cannot—yield you the submission of a slave.”

“And where is the child who owes to a parent what you owe to me?” demanded Mrs St Clair warmly; “where is the child possessed of such an inheritance—of rank—of power—of riches—of beauty—of talents?—and where is the mother who would not feel as I do, at seeing them all sacrificed to the cupidity of an artful, unprincipled man?”

“And is it because I possess all these advantages, that I am to be denied the privilege of the poorest and humblest?” asked Lady Rossville, her voice faltering with emotion; “of what value to me are all those gifts, if I may not share them with those I love?—ah! how much rather would I forego them all——”

“Than not indulge your own weak, wayward, childish fancy,” cried her mother with indignation; “this is not to be borne! How shall I tear that bandage from your eyes?—If you doubt me, will you credit the testimony of your friend—your counsellor—your Platonic admirer, Mr Lyndsay?”

“ I respect and esteem Mr Lyndsay,” said the Countess, “ but I will not adopt his prejudices.”

“ Will you believe the voice of the world, then ?”

“ I already know all that the world can say.— It will tell me he is thoughtless—extravagant—imprudent—erring, it may be, in many things—but all that he has told me himself—such he once was—till—till he loved.”

Mrs St Clair groaned. “ Then whose testimony will you admit, since you reject mine ?—you reject Mr Lyndsay’s—you reject that of the whole world.”

“ I will receive none,” said Lady Rossville mildly, but firmly—“ erring, perhaps faulty, he may have been ; but to doubt that he loves me——*there*, I will receive no one’s testimony but his own.”

“ Then you are lost !” exclaimed Mrs St Clair, in violent agitation—“ but it must not—shall not be. You dare not marry without my consent—without the consent of——” she stopped—“ I tell you——”

“ If I am to be ruled by any authority it must be solely by my mother’s,” said Gertrude proudly—

“ no other being has, or ever can have, the right to control me in this point. Once before I promised, that I would form no engagement without your consent until I had attained the age of twenty-one—I am now willing to repeat it—but, in the meantime, my preference must be left free. And now, mama, let us end this strife—it may be my misfortune to differ from you—do not—oh ! do not let that difference divide us—I will be always yours in affection, if not in sentiment.”—And she would have embraced her, but her mother repelled her.

“ Such a compromise is a mere mockery,” said she with bitterness ; “ but I too am sick of altercation—such as it is, then, for the present your promise must suffice—let me trust in Heaven that your delusion may be dispelled ere it be too late !”

“ *If* it is a delusion, I too join in the prayer,” said the Countess, but more in the tone of lofty assurance than of lowly supplication.

This contest with her mother only served to strengthen Gertrude—as violence invariably does—in her own opinions. There was something too in the very suspense calculated to give a play to her

imagination, and fascinate the youthful heart far more than any sober certainty of waking bliss could have done. She would have shrunk from acknowledging even to herself that she harboured a doubt ; but how many a stranger feeling mingles unknown to ourselves with the home-born sentiments of our hearts !

CHAPTER XXV.

With an old bachelor how things miscarry !

What shall I do ? Go hang myself—or marry ?

HORACE.

THERE was a duty which Gertrude was particularly anxious to discharge, and that was the debt she had incurred to Mr Adam Ramsay. Having procured a bill for the money, she, therefore, ordered her carriage one day, and having contrived to elude the curiosity of Lady Betty, and the vigilance of Miss Pratt, she set out alone in hopes of making her peace—at any rate of relieving her mind from the weight of pecuniary obligation. A thaw had begun—but just begun, consequently, both earth and atmosphere were in that raw, chill, dubious state, which combines all the discomforts of foul and frosty weather, and even in the narrow precincts of uncle Adam's parterre, both were displayed in perfection. The

snow, though soft, lay deep betwixt his house and the little gate which separated him from the road ; no attempt had been made to clear it away or open a passage ; and an *avalanche*, which had fallen from the roof of the house, lay undisturbed upon the steps, and effectually blocked up the door. Altogether it had a desolate uninhabited look, different from the neatly scraped paths and sand-ed steps belonging to the houses on either side, and Gertrude began to fear, she knew not what, from this desolate exterior. Meanwhile, the foot-man having, with some difficulty, contrived to wade up to the door, knocked loud and long in all the energy of insolence and ill humour—but no answer was returned. Again and again the summons was repeated, in a manner enough to have raised even the drowsy porter in Macbeth—but with no better success. At length the servant turned away in despair.

“ There is nobody within, my lady.”—But at that moment his lady’s eye was caught by a view of the back of uncle Adam’s wig, as its *queue* hung in expressive silence over a chair in the parlour. It retained its posture, however, so im-moveably, that it seemed as though it would have

required a touch of galvanism to ascertain whether it were suspended from a dead or a living skull. Alarmed at the immobility of this appendage of uncle Adam's brain, Lady Rosville hastily called to have the carriage door opened, and without exactly knowing what she *would* or *could* do, she stepped out, and made the best of her way through the snow towards the house. Scarcely had she touched the door when, to her surprise, it flew open, as if impelled by the invisible hands of the White Cat herself. No invisible hands were there, however, for there stood uncle Adam in *propria personæ*, with his pig-tail and his cold blue radish-looking fingers.

"Come in—come in," cried he, in no very inviting tone, as Gertrude stood for a moment transfixed with astonishment at this sudden resuscitation; "I'm sure this is no weather to be stan'in' at open doors,"—and violently shutting it, he led the way to his little parlour. A dead fire—a dirty hearth—and the remains of a wretched breakfast, were the only traces of civilization to be descried.

"I was afraid something was the matter," said Gertrude, as she entered. "My servant

knocked repeatedly, but could get no answer, but I am happy to find it was a false alarm, and that I have the pleasure of seeing you well, my dear uncle."

Mr Ramsay hemmed—

" You may see something's the matter, or the things wadnae be stan'in' there till this time o' day—there's naebody in the hooss but mysel'; and I wasna gawn to play the flunky to thae idle puppies o' yours," pointing to the Countess' dashing lacquey, as he strutted before the window; " and I never wish to see ony body at my door that canna chap at it themsel's;" then muttering between his teeth, " fules should nae hac chappin-sticks," he seemed to recover a little, at having thus vented his venom in ignominious epithets applied to his niece and her spruce serving-man.

Lady Rossville was much at a loss how to proceed. At no time did she perfectly comprehend the breadth of uncle Adam's dialect; but, on the present occasion, he was more than usually unintelligible; and, as she could neither divine what was meant by fules nor chappin-sticks, she prudently passed them over, and proceeded to business.

“ I am come to repay my debt to you,” said she, in her sweetest manner ; “ that is, the pecuniary part of it ; but your generous trust and confidence in me I never can repay. My dear uncle, will you accept of my warmest—my most grateful thanks for your kindness ?” And she put the money, inclosed in a pocket-book of her own embroidering, into his hands, and affectionately pressed them as she did so.

“ An’ what has that to do wi’t ?” demanded Mr Ramsay, eyeing the *souvenir* with no gracious aspect.

“ That is a pocket-book I have worked on purpose for you ; and I hope you will keep it for my sake.”

“ Weel, I may do sae ; though it’s nonsense to gi’e me the like o’ thae foolish things ;” and taking out the bill, he carefully wrapt the pocket-book in a piece of paper, and opening an old bureau that stood in the corner of the room, deposited it in a little drawer, then cautiously locking it, returned to his seat. “ Next to no borrowin’ the best thing’s ready payin’, and I’m glad to see you hac that muckle discretion ;” and his features gradually relaxed into a more benign expression, as he slowly

took out his spectacles to peruse the bill ; when, suddenly resuming their usual stormy cast—“ What’s this ?” cried he, “ whar’s the interest for my money ?”

In great confusion at this unthought-of demand, Gertrude apologized by saying, she had been so little accustomed to money transactions, that she had entirely forgot that part of the claim.

“ I think it’s time you was learnin’ something o’ the vaala o’ money, noo that ye’ve learnt hoo to spend and to borrow sae readily.—I dinna care ae bodle about it for my ain part, but I like to see folk ken what they’re aboot, and gie awbody their duc ;” and taking up an old blackened stump of a pen, he began to cast up his account on the back of the bill ; then showing it to Lady Rossville, “ ‘There’s what I was intcetled to frac you ; but I tell you I dinna want it—I only want to mak you sensible o’ what you’re aboot.”

Gertrude acknowledged the justice of his admonition, and, having thanked him for it, she was again taken into favour, but it was of short duration.

“ Hae nae you got your feet wat wi’ that snaw ?” said he in a complacent tone—then glancing at

her little silk slippers, all his wrath revived. “Bonny like feet, to be sure, to be wadin’ through the snaw! I thought you had mair sense than till hae come oot wi’ such daft-like things in such weather—they’re liker dancin’ schule pumps than sensible walkin’ shoes.”

And uncle Adam walked up and down in great discomposure, his own huge leathern buckets creaking at every step.

“I did not know all I had to encounter, else I certainly should have provided better for it,” said Gertrude, smiling;—“but I am not at all subject to colds, so don’t be alarmed on that account, and when your servant comes in, she will dry my shoes at your kitchen fire.”

“You’ll sit a while before you see ony servant o’ mine—I hae nae servant—and the kitchen fire’s black oot.”

“No servant, and no fire!” exclaimed Lady Rossville, horror-struck at such an avowal.—“Good Heavens! what a situation! how—what has occasioned this?”

“Just the occasion is, that that impudent thief that’s been wi’ me these twa year, thought proper to own a marriage wi’ a scoondrell o’ a

dragoon that she ne'er saw till within this month ; —and what do you think o' her assurance ?—she had the impudence to tell me last night that she but to leave my service immediately, unless I wad buy her husband's discharge—tak' him into my service, and settle an annuity on her for life—I daursay there ne'er was the like o't !”

“ That was certainly very audacious,” said Gertrude—“ and she ought, at least, to have remained until you had procured another servant.”

“ Her remain ! do ye think I wad left mysel' at the discrassion o' such a slut as that ? I just took her by the shoothers, and gie'd her the outside o' the door for her answer—Settle an annuity upon her ! I've settled her wi' a vengeance—Tak' a dragoon into my service ! I wad just as soon tak' the hangman into my service !”

“ What a picture of lonely old age !” thought Gertrude—“ left at the mercy of a mercenary unprincipled servant—destitute even of the necessaries of life—how dismal !”

Even the unfortunate peculiarity of his temper, which kept him aloof from all fellowship with others, she view'd—as, indeed, it was—an additional misfortune, and she felt anxious to alleviate

the wretchedness of his state by every means in her power. But to have insinuated to uncle Adam, that his comfort at all depended either upon a servant or a fire, would have been an insult he would have resented accordingly.

“ You must come to Rossville with me, my dear uncle,” said the Countess, taking his hand with her sweetest look and accent of entreaty.

“ Me gang to Rossville !” exclaimed Mr Ramsay, with a sudden start of horror; “ I’ll do nae such thing—what wad tak’ me to Rossville !”

“ To pay me a visit—to give me the pleasure of seeing you in my own house ; you know you must visit me some time ; and this is so good an opportunity, that, indeed, I will not excuse you.”

“ I suppose you think I canna contrive to live fower-and-twenty hours by mysel’—but you’re much mista’en, if you think I depend for my comfort either on man or woman ; at ony rate, there’s a tyelor and his wife, down bye there, very discreet folk, that wad be ready to do ony thing I wanted, so you need nae fash your heed about me.”

“ I have no doubt, you could have abundance of service,” said Lady Rossville, still persisting

in her benevolent intentions—"to say nothing of your own domestics at Bloom-Park—my aunts too—I am sure, if they knew of your situation——"

"My situation!" interrupted Mr Ramsay, sharply, "What's my situation?—a great situation, to be sure, to ha'e got rid o' a gude-for-naething impudent thief that wanted to pick my pocket.—I'm only thankful I'm quit o' her—and that's what you ca' my situation—what else could you say if I was lyin' wi' my throat cut?"

"I beg your pardon—but you must make allowance for my blunders—you know my tongue is not so Scotch as my heart—and that is another reason why you must come to Rossville to give me 'some lessons in my dear native accents—I must now learn to speak Scotch to my poor people." And Gertrude hung coaxingly round him, till even uncle Adam's flinty nature began to melt.

"What wad ye mak o' me at your braw Castell, amang aw your fine folk?—I'm no used to your grandees, and I'm no gawn to begin to learn fashionable mainners noo—so dinna ask me—

I'm no gawn to mak a fule o' mysel' at this time o' day."

"I assure you, we have no fine people at Rossville, my dear uncle—not one; and, indeed, I do not like what are called fine people any more than you do. We are a very plain, quiet, old-fashioned family—quite clock-work in our ways and hours; and besides, if you don't like them or us, you shall take your own way in every thing—you shall breakfast, dine, sup, if you please, in your own apartment, and be quite at home—now don't—pray, don't refuse me."

"An' be made a sang o' to aw the hooss, high and low? I suppose it'll be through the toon next, that I could nae mak a shift for a day, without that impudent thief, Chirsty Carstairs.—No, no, I'm no gawn to be dragooned oot o' my ain hooss by her."

Gertrude was certainly not a persevering character; and, despairing of success, she had risen to depart, when her heart smote her at the thoughts of abandoning the desolate old man to his cheerless solitary state—at his advanced age, and in such inclement weather, to be left in a house alone!—the idea was frightful. Again she

returned to the charge, and at length she prevailed ; for she held out an inducement uncle Adam was not proof against. She told him of the picture he would see at Rossville of her he had so truly loved, and the right string was touched. A silken thread might have led uncle Adam over half the globe when Lizzie Lundie was paramount. His little preparations were soon made ; the tailor's wife was summoned, and invested with the charge of the mansion ; and Mr Ramsay, covered with shame and confusion at his own folly in being thus led by a child, sneaked into the carriage with his head on his breast, and his ears hanging down to his shoulders. Lady Rossville tried to animate him, but he still retained his humbled discomfited air, till the carriage stopped at the Castle gate, when the old man burst forth—

“ I’ve a gude mind just to gang back the way I cam—auld idiot that I am, to be rinnin’ after pickters like a bairn !”

But it was now too late—the movements of the great are commonly conducted with a celerity that baffles all calculation ; and uncle Adam was scarcely aware that he had reached his destination, ere he found himself in the hall surrounded

by a train of servants. All that was left for him, therefore, was to scowl upon them as he passed along ; but they were too well-bred to testify either mirth or surprise at sight of such a phenomenon, and in spite of himself, he was ushered to the saloon with all the customary demonstrations of respect. It was vacant—and Lady Rossville having safely deposited him by the side of a blazing fire, and vainly tried to persuade him to partake, with her, of some refreshment, left him, for a little, to solace himself with the newspapers of the day, while she went to announce his arrival to her mother.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Listen to me, and if you speak me fair,
I'll tell you news.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Gertrude had left her mother in the morning, she had left her, as usual, fretful and gloomy—but, on returning, she was struck with the change, which, in the course of a few hours, had taken place. Her countenance was lightened—her air was almost joyous ; and, though some slight traces of agitation were visible, yet it was evidently of no painful kind, for the *tout ensemble* was that of a person who had thrown off a load of cares and of fears. She was seated at her toilette, which, ever since the Earl's death, had been much neglected ; but, upon her daughter's entrance, she dismissed her maid.

“ Come away, my love,” cried she, holding out

her arms, and affectionately embracing her ; “ I have been tiring to death for you.—Where have you been, my sweetest ?”

Gertrude, but not without wondering at this sudden overflow of love and tenderness, related to her the particulars of her visit to Mr Ramsay, and its consequences.

“ Ah ! nothing could be better managed,” said Mrs St Clair ; “ and his arrival to-day is quite *à propos*, as I mean to make my appearance at dinner, and it may very well pass for a compliment to my good uncle ;” then, changing her tone to one of deep solemnity—“ Since I saw you in the morning, love, I have been a good deal shocked with a piece of news I accidentally stumbled upon, in a provincial paper I happened to take up—my nerves, to be sure, have been sadly shattered of late,” and she sighed and took up her smelling-bottle.—“ But ’tis impossible not to be struck with such an event—Gertrude, you have no longer any thing to fear from that unfortunate man—he—he has perished !” added she in strong but transient emotion.

Gertrude involuntarily shuddered. There is always something revolting in the gaiety that

springs from the death of a fellow being ; and, for a moment, she turned away her head from the wild unnatural pleasure that gleamed in her mother's eye.

“ What was this man's life or death to me ?” exclaimed she suddenly. “ Surely now the time is come, when you will tell me all !”

“ Not now, my love—do not urge me—the time may come when I shall have no secret with you, but, at present, it can serve no purpose but that of agitating and distressing me. Perhaps I should not have mentioned this disagreeable occurrence to you at all, but for the fear that it might have come upon you unawares, and so have betrayed you into some symptom of recognition that had better be avoided ; for, I think, you could scarcely fail to be struck as I was at reading the account.—As yet, it has got no further than the Barnford Chronicle, but it will, of course, appear in the London papers, and you will probably hear it read and commented on at all hands, so 'tis better you should receive it from mine—fore-warned is fore-armed ;” and taking up a newspaper, she pointed out a paragraph under the head of “ Melancholy Shipwreck.” It set forth, in the

usual terms, a most elaborate and high-drawn narrative of the wreck of the Dauntless Packet, bound for America, on the coast of Ireland, when every soul on board had perished. Several pieces of the wreck, and some of the bodies of the unhappy sufferers, had been cast on shore, and were all minutely described, amongst others, that of a “gentleman, seemingly turned of thirty years of age—tall—fair complexion—light hair—blue eyes—high nose—linen marked J. L. On his person were found a watch, a small sum of money, and a pocket-book, the latter containing papers and bills, but so much damaged by the water, that the writing was wholly obliterated—only on one of the bills, the letters ‘S lair’ could be traced, and those were the only marks which could throw any light on the unfortunate gentleman’s identity,” &c. &c. &c.

“It is very sad to be called upon to rejoice over an event fraught with so much misery,” said the Countess with a sigh, as she finished it.

“I do not call upon you to rejoice, Gertrude,” said Mrs St Clair, solemnly. “God forbid that I should! I merely wished you to see that you have nothing more to fear in that quarter.”

“ But, after all, mama, how can you be quite sure that this ill-fated sufferer is the very person you suppose—Lewiston ?”

“ Because I have it under his own hand, that he had actually engaged his passage in that very vessel ; and it is surely very improbable that there should have been two men on board a small packet answering so completely to the same description in every particular ; and, even if there were, both must have shared the same fate.—And now let us drop the subject, and every thing relating to it. Should it pass without any observation from those two tiresome fools, Lady Betty and Miss Pratt, 'tis well ; if it is noticed and commented upon, you will, of course, be prepared to talk about it as any one else would do.”

“ But Mr Lyndsay ?” said Gertrude—“ surely you will explain every thing to him ?”

“ I have already explained enough to Mr Lyndsay,” said Mrs St Clair, angrily.—“ I know not what more he would require.”

“ Yet you said you had promised to lay open the whole——”

“ But the whole is now at an end ; and I do

not feel myself called upon to revive old and disagreeable stories, merely to gratify his curiosity."

"In justice to yourself—to me," said Gertrude, urgently, "you ought not to lose a moment in clearing up, if possible, every thing that appears wrong in your conduct and in mine."

"Injustice to myself," said Mrs St Clair, colouring with anger, "I will not harrow up my feelings, and endanger my health, by recurring to any thing of a painful or agitating nature at present. Mr Lyndsay, I repeat, knows all that it is necessary for him to know: if he would know more, let him know that the Countess of Rossvile, in her own house, and under the protection of her mother, stands in no need either of his advice or assistance."

"No! that he shall never hear from me," said Gertrude, warmly. "Mr Lyndsay may have been duped—he shall never be insulted under my roof, if I can prevent it."

"Is this the language I am now to hear?" cried Mrs St Clair, passionately. "Am I so degraded by your exaltation, that I must submit to be stigmatized—and by you? But beware—Lewiston is gone, but his power remains." Lady

Rossville remained silent, but tears fell from her eyes ; at length she said, “ I am no longer a child to be frightened by a bugbear—either tell me who this person really was, and what power he possessed over me, or, if you refuse to gratify me in this, at least let his name be no more mentioned betwixt us.—Already,” cried she, giving scope to her emotion, and speaking under its excitement—“ already my feelings have been sacrificed—my reputation endangered—certainly sullied in the eyes of one person, and yet to him you refuse that explanation, which is due both to him and to me.”

While her daughter spoke, Mrs St Clair seemed to be struggling with her passions—at length, by a violent effort, she obtained the mastery over them, and in a feeble languid tone, said —

“ I am unable to contend with you, Gertrude ; you are mistress here, and may command, it seems, even your mother to obey you ;—but, exhausted as I am by a long and dangerous illness,—my nerves shattered—my mind unstrung, you might have spared me yet a little——But why should you weep, Lady Rossville, you who have all that this world can bestow ? Methinks you

might, at least, have left tears for your mother—poor dependant—humble as she is ! Gertrude, I am in no situation to oppose your will—with a worn-out frame—broken spirits—depending on your bounty for my daily bread ——”

Accustomed, as she had all her life been to her mother's acting, still Gertrude never could hear a reproach from her lips without the bitterest sorrow and compunction ; and, on the present occasion, every word went as a dagger to her heart. Her attention had artfully been led away from the point at issue, and now she only beheld herself as the oppressor of a mother, feeble, old, and poor.

With her usual impetuosity, she at once flung herself into her mother's power—sued for forgiveness, and the scene ended, as such scenes always did end, in Mrs St Clair's victory. Still she felt it was but a temporary one, as a mere triumph over the feelings, always is. There might be silence,—but there was no submission at heart, for there could be no conviction of mind. Such as it was, however, it served for the present—a hasty reconciliation was patched up, on a sort of mutual understanding, that all relating to the unfortunate

Lewiston was to be consigned to oblivion. Mrs St Clair was not to be urged to any explanation till she should see fit to make it—and Lady Rossville was never more to be offended with the mention of a name, connected as it was, in her ideas, with so much degradation. Mrs St Clair then rung for her maid to resume her office, and the Countess returned to the saloon to her guest.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Mes yeux sont trop blessés, et la cour et la ville
Ne m'offrent rien qu' objets à m'échauffer la bile ;
J'entre en une humeur noire, en un chagrin profond,
Quand je vois vivre entre eux les hommes comme ils font ;
Je n'y puis plus tenir, j'enrage : et mon dessein
Est de rompre en visière à tout le genre humain.

MOLIERE.

UPON entering the apartment, Gertrude's surprise was great at finding Mr Ramsay and Miss Pratt seated together, seemingly in a most harmonious *tête-à-tête*. She had anticipated almost with dread a meeting betwixt two such opposite natures, and had expected something to result from it little less discordant than the union of a bagpipe and fiddle ; instead of which, she found their tastes and sentiments completely blended into one beauteous whole, and the current of their conversation gliding on so smoothly, that it did not seem even to require Cowper's animated

“ No——

To brush the surface, and to make it flow.”

But the extraordinary conjunction of two such distant planets is easily accounted for. It was not brought about by any heavenly influences, for such were not the tests for their spirits—but simply by means of a sufficient quantity of well expressed, well applied abuse, which is perhaps the strongest of all cements for worldly minds.

Uncle Adam, it is already known, had been left like one of the fortunate adventurers in the Arabian Tales, in a luxurious apartment, surrounded—not with singing damsels, and silver tissue, and sherbet, 'tis true—but with what to him were far greater enjoyments—silence, and freedom, and a newspaper. Perhaps another in his place would have taken a survey of the room, or have pondered a little over his comforts—but he was none of these—he was quite unconscious of the finery that surrounded him, and not at all aware of the difference between the crimson and gold damask *fauteuil* in which he was seated, and his own little strait-backed hair-cloth one—neither was he at all struck with the contrast between the profusion of lamps which diffused their enchanting light, and his long wicked, dim streaming tallow candles. The bright blazing fire, in-

deed, was too powerful an object to be overlooked, but that only drew forth a peevish exclamation as he pushed back from its overpowering influence, and sought for his spectacles to see how stood the stocks. But no spectacles were to be found ! Every pocket, and they were not a few, was searched, and their depths profound explored—but in vain ; the case—the shagreen case was there, as if only to mock his hopes, for it was empty ; and uncle Adam at length recollected, with infinite vexation, that he had left their precious contents on the little table in his own parlour. How tormenting to behold with the mind's eye the very object we are in want of, lying on a particular spot, where our own hands have placed it !—to see it, as it were, within our grasp, and yet to be in torments for the want of it ! Such as have experienced this will sympathize in the sufferings of uncle Adam, as he saw his spectacles lying afar off upon their broad end—their arms extended as if to grasp his temples—while yet the spectacles saw not him !

“ I deserve this for my folly in comin' to such a place ! ” was his mental ejaculation, as he shuffled away to a window to see whether it was

not yet too dark for him to find his way home to his own house and his spectacles. But, at that critical moment, the door opened, and Miss Pratt, like another Fairy Paribanon, entered. She had discovered his arrival, and having had the advantage of hearing his character and peculiarities thoroughly discussed upon various occasions, she was prepared to meet him accordingly.

Miss Pratt, like many other people, had a sort of instinctive reverence for riches, even where she had not the slightest prospect of profiting by them. She, therefore, accosted Mr Ramsay with the greatest respect and courtesy, expressed the pleasure it gave her to see him at Rossville—hoped he had taken something since he came—it wanted a long while to dinner yet—and, in short, did the honours as though she had been mistress of the mansion.

Uncle Adam, who knew not who he had to deal with, was not displeased at the *empressement* testified in his behalf by a stranger, and he declined the proffered civility in his politest manner—adding, that he never took any thing between breakfast and dinner.

“ And an excellent rule it is,” said Miss Pratt, in her most emphatic tone, “ for them who can keep it ; for I really think there’s a great deal too much eating and drinking goes on in the present day, especially amongst young people. The consequence is, you hear of nothing but bile—bile—bile, from the oldest to the youngest.—I really think poor Lord Rossville hurt himself very much by his manner of eating—not but what he was a moderate man in the main—but, to tell the truth—God knows ! but I never can help thinking he dealt too deep in a fine fat venison pasty that was at dinner, the very last day he sat at his own table, poor man !”

“ I dinna doot it,” said Mr Ramsay, secure that he never would come to an untimely end by any such means.

“ I’ve given our young Countess a hint about that,” resumed Miss Pratt ; “ for I really think there’s need for a little reform in the kitchen here. It was just yesterday I was saying to her that, for all the cooks she had, and for all the grand things they sent up, I didn’t believe she had one that could make a drop good plain barley-broth, or knew how to guide a sheep’s head and trotters.—

She laughed, and desired Philips, the *maitre d'hotel*, to be sure to have one Scotch dish on the table every day; but I've no great brew of any Scotch dish that'll ever come out of the hands of a French cook."

"There'll be nae want o' a fire to cook the dinner, I'm sure," said uncle Adam, pointing to the well-filled chimney; "there's a fire might roast an ox. There's no possibility o' going near it."

"I'm sure that's true; for I'm quite o' your opinion, Mr Ramsay, as the old byeword says, 'better a wee ingle to warm ye, than a muckle fire to burn you.' It's really a sin to see such fires; and it's all the same way, every room in the house blazing with fires and lamps, till, I declare, my eyes are like to be put out o' my head; but Lady Rossville's so fond of light, she never can get enough of it—and her eyes are young and strong; but she'll maybe feel the frost of it yet, when she comes to know the value of them like you and me, Sir."

Miss Pratt was quite conscious that her stout, active, indefatigable eyes, were not to be mentioned in the same breath with Mr Ramsay's little, weak, pale, bleared ones; but when people are re-

solved to please, they must sometimes make great sacrifices. The compliment was not wholly thrown away, though it was not returned in kind, for, with one of his vinegar smiles, uncle Adam replied,—

“ I set mair value upon my spectacles than my een noo, for I find the tane o’ very little use to me wanting the tither ; I’ve forgotten my glasses in my ain hooss, and I canna read ac word o’ thae papers that she put into my hands.”

“ That *is* really a hard case !” exclaimed Miss Pratt, with the most ardent expression of sympathy ; “ but I’ll tell you what, Mr Ramsay, you need be at no loss for spectacles in this house, for poor Lord Rossville, I’m sure, if he left one pair he left a score—always changing his glasses. I really think he hurt his sight very much by it—I would get you them in an instant, but Lady Rossville has the keys of all his places, and she’s with her mother just now, so, perhaps, you’ll wait till she comes out ; but if you’ll give me leave, I’ll read the papers to you, for I haven’t seen them myself yet—somebody or other whipt them out of the room, this morning, before I had time to look at them—I suspect some of the servants, for

they are really getting out their horns at no allowance. Lady Rossville stands much in need of some experienced judicious friend to take some management, for they're really going off at the nail. I do *not* know what servants are to come to for my part ; they'll be no living with them by-and-bye. I have but one, and what do you think, Sir, of the trick she played me the t'other day ? It's but seldom I leave my own house, for I'm one of those who think there's no place like home, but you know one must give up their own way sometimes ; and I had been away upon a visit, and came home one dreadful night very wearied and far from well—had been just comforting myself all the way with the thoughts of getting a warm cup of tea and my own bed, when, instead of that, lo, and behold ! I found my house shut up—my key nobody knew where—and my fine madam off on some junketting match ! The consequence was, I must have lain in the street, if your worthy nieces, the Miss Blacks, hadn't accidentally heard of the situation I was in, and made a point of my coming to them—and after all this, I'm obliged to keep her for six months, or pay her wages and board wages !”

All this was oil and honey to uncle Adam's wounds ; and Chirsty Carstairs' enormities, great as they were, looked somewhat smaller beside the still more monstrous offence of Babby Broadfoot. He had had the satisfaction of turning the delinquent out of his doors, instead of having endured the humiliation of being locked out by her ; consequently, whatever similarity there might be in their injuries, still he stood upon higher ground, and he gave a faint chuckle of delight at finding his new friend's misfortune so much worse than his own.

Miss Pratt now turned to the newspaper.—
 “ I'm just taking a glance of the stocks, for though it's but little I have to do with them, still, you know, ‘ we all bow to the bush we get bield frae.’—Aye ! there's another tumble I see, down to 80 and a fraction—rose to $80\frac{2}{3}$ —some done so high as $81\frac{1}{4}$ —left off, at the close, at $80\frac{1}{2}$.”

“ That's the 3 per cents.—and what are India bonds ?” asked Mr Ramsay.

“ India bonds, 61 to 63 premium—long annuities shut, short do.” &c. &c. &c. And Miss Pratt, in the twinkling of an eye, ran through the whole range of the money-market, displaying, in

her career, the most complete knowledge of each and every branch, as though she had been born and bred a stock-jobber.

Uncle Adam was astonished. He had read of women ascending to the skies in balloons, and descending to the depths of the sea in bells ; but for a woman to have entered the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Stock Exchange, and to know, to a fraction, the difference between 3 per cents. red. and 3 per cents. acc.—and to be mistress of all the dread mysteries of scrip and omnium !—it was what uncle Adam in all his philosophy never had dreamed of, and Miss Pratt rose at least 5 per cent. in his estimation.

Having discussed the stocks in all their bearings, she proceeded with the varied contents of the paper ; but the fall of the 3 per cents. had not sweetened her temper, and she was very bitter, in her indignation, at “ Proposals for publishing, by Subscription, a Print of the Reverend Peter Pirie, Proofs, L. 2, 2s.” &c. ; and at the announcement that the lady of a “ Lieutenant Duncan Dow, late of His Majesty’s 119th Regiment,” had presented him with a son and heir. But the whole measure of her wrath was reserv-

ed for the obituary record, which, as usual, contained the apotheosis of some, it may be, very worthy, but certainly very insignificant, individual, as in the present instance.

“Died, at the house of his father, No. 2, East Cotton Row, where he had gone for the recovery of his health, on the 13th ult. aged 45, Nathaniel Lamb, Esq. hosier and glover, after a long and lingering illness, which he bore with the most heroic patience, and Christian resignation. To the purest benevolence, the most enlightened piety, and the most devoted patriotism, Mr Lamb, junior, united the firmest principles, the most perfect integrity, and the most affable address——”

Here uncle Adam broke out with—“Affable address ! the affability o’ a hosier ! I never could bear that word aw my days, and far less noo—dinna read ony mair, Ma’am—Affable ! affable ! I wonder wha wad tak affability aff the hands o’ a glover !—but it’s just o’ a piece wi’ aw thing else in this world now. Half-pay lieutenants maun hae leddys and heirs—and bodies o’ schule-maisters and ministers maun sit for their pickters, and hae their faces printed as though

they war kings and conquerors. The newspapers are filled wi' the lives o' folk that naebody ever heard o' till they war dead. I dinna ken what things are to come to !”

“ Indeed, Sir, that's my wonder, for I really think the world has been turned fairly topsy-turvy since our days ; but I assure you it would be well if people were satisfied with putting their deaths in the papers. What do you think, Sir, of having to pay, as I had the t'other day, thirteen pence halfpenny for a notification of the death of a woman that wasn't a drop's blood to me—just thirteen pence halfpenny out of my hand, and that for a person that, to tell the truth, I thought had been dead twenty years ago.”

This was another nut for uncle Adam, who had long brooded over the mortification of having had to pay a penny for a similar compliment, and even thought how he should obtain redress, or at least revenge. Miss Pratt went on—

“ As Anthony Whyte (my nephew, Mr Whyte of Whyte-Hall) says, ‘ I've given orders to take in no letters from the Post-Office now with black

scals—they're either disagreeable or expensive, and sometimes both."

"It's a very sensible regulation," said uncle Adam, warmly.

"And as for burial letters—what do you think, Sir, of Anthony Whyte being asked to three burials in one week—and two of them people he never had broke bread with?"

"I think a man had better be a saullie at oncc," said Mr Black, vehemently.

But here the colloquy of these two congenial souls was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Rossville.

"That's an ooncommon sensible woman," said uncle Adam, as his friend and ally pattered away to the other end of the room for a fire-screen for the Countess.

"I really am agreeably surprised with your uncle," whispered Miss Pratt, as she drew Lady Rossville a little aside; "a fine shrewd old man—I assure you, he knows odds from ends; it's not every body that will do with him—he puts you to your trumps in a hurry."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them.

:

LORD BACON.

GERTRUDE watched with some solicitude the meeting between her mother and Mr Lyndsay, as she entered the drawing-room before dinner, leaning on her arm in all the parade of convalescence. When he came up to offer his congratulations, her cheek was slightly suffused, and for a moment her eye fell beneath the mild yet searching expression of his. But quickly regaining her self-possession, she replied to his salutation in that distant ceremonious manner, which plainly indicated the sort of footing they were henceforth to be upon. Mr Lyndsay had too much tact not to feel what was implied, and the inference he drew was, that he must now cease to

expect any explanation from her as to the past. The Earl's death had deprived him of the only hold he had over her, for there was no one now who had a right to interpose their authority. Averse as he was to interference in general, yet, upon this occasion, he considered himself called upon to act a decided part, and he resolved to take the first opportunity of coming to an understanding with Mrs St Clair on the subject of the mysterious interviews.

Lady Rossville felt that some apology was due to her cousin, for the introduction of so uncouth a companion as uncle Adam ; and she hastened to explain to him the cause of his becoming her guest, and to request that he might not consider him as any tax upon his politeness, or think it incumbent upon him to entertain a person who, she assured him, despised entertainment in every shape.

But Lyndsay was not one of those fastidious beings, who can only tolerate the chosen few whose endowments place them, at least, on a level with themselves.—Although the gulf was wide which separated Mr Ramsay and him in mind and manners, yet he did not disdain all fellowship

with him, but welcomed the old man with that politeness which, when it springs from benevolence, can never fail to please, and, at the same time, with that ease and simplicity which, of all modes of expression, are, without doubt, the most attractive. Although quite alive to the peculiarities of his new associate, and not a little amused with many of them, yet his better feelings always prevailed over his sense of ridicule, and instead of "giving play" to uncle Adam's foibles, he led the conversation to such subjects as were best calculated to show him to advantage.

It is only well informed people who are capable of extracting information from others. We require to know something of a subject ourselves, before we can even question others to any purpose upon it; and, perhaps, it often happens that our own ignorance is in fault, when we throw the blame upon other people's stupidity. Such was not Edward Lyndsay's case; and while he unconsciously displayed his own knowledge even in seeking information, he drew forth the hidden stores of Mr Ramsay, and rendered him almost an instructive and an entertaining companion.

Uncle Adam was no Othello, but still, in the

course of his long life, he had met with his “ disastrous chances,” his “ moving accidents,” his “ hair-breadth ’scapes,” and had traversed many an “ antre vast and desart idle ;” and though he would have disdained any thing like a regular recapitulation of ought he had ever seen or met with, yet by judicious management a great deal could be extracted from him in his own homely manner.

Meanwhile Miss Pratt’s cloven foot began to display itself to his piercing ken. Vague notions at first floated through his brain about her, but they were such as only wanted a little more time and opportunity to body forth into real shapes. He had a notion that she spoke too much,—that she took too much upon her—that she tasted of too many different dishes, instead of dining upon one thing, which was one of his cardinal virtues—then, it was not her business to press him to eat in his own niece’s house, where he felt he had a better right to eat and to speak than she had. But the head and front of her offending was her asking him to drink a glass of Madeira with him during dinner—that was a piece of assurance he could not away with. In his time, it used to be

a serious and solemn thing for a gentleman to invite a lady to drink wine with him ; but here was a total *bouleversement* of the natural order of things, and uncle Adam actually blushed an acceptance, as he wondered what was to come next. To counterbalance these improprieties, she had, in the twinkling of an eye, suited him in a pair of spectacles, which seemed as though they had been made for him, or he for them—she had bespoke a haggis for dinner the following day, and undertaken to direct Monsieur Morelle in the art of stuffing it—then she lost seven games at backgammon, for which she paid down three and sixpence, with very evident reluctance, too, which always serves to enhance the value of the winnings tenfold ; so that, upon the whole, uncle Adam was rather inclined for once to suspend his judgment, and instead of decidedly condemning her, he merely began to look upon her as a sort of doubtful character.

Lady Rossville had ordered an apartment for her uncle, communicating with the yellow turret, which contained the goddess of his idolatry, and which she intended should henceforth be his *sanc-tum sanctorum*. She, therefore, introduced him

to it the following day, but that he might feel more at liberty to indulge his soft emotions, she was retiring, when looking round, he called to her,—

“ But whar’s the pickter you promised me ?”

“ There,” said Gertrude, pointing to the Diana.

“ That !” exclaimed he in a tone of surprise and indignation. “ *That* Lizzie Lundie! they’re no blate that evens her to it !” And he walked round and round the turret, something in the manner of an obstreperous horse in a mill.

“ This is very strange,” said Gertrude—“ both Lord Rossville and Miss Pratt seemed to know the history of this picture so perfectly, that I never imagined there could be a doubt about it ; I am really sorry that you have been so disappointed.”

“ Disappointed !” repeated uncle Adam, stopping short, and looking almost black with wrath, —“ I’m mair than disappointed—I’m perfectly disgusted !” then taking another look—“ Lizzie Lundie was a daacent, wise-like, sensible craater as ever lived—and to compare her to that brazen-

faced tawpie, wi' a moon upon her head, and a great bow and arrow in her hand !”

And again he turned away in increasing animosity against the Diana.

“ But, my dear uncle, these are merely adventitious embellishments—you see she is represented in the character of Diana ——”

“ And what business had they to represent her as ony such thing ?”

This was a question Lady Rossville was aware she could not answer to his satisfaction, therefore prudently waived it by asking another.

“ So, then, you don't discover any resemblance ?”

“ Resemblance !—Hoo is't possible there can be ony resemblance ? Wha ever saw *her* in that mad-like oonnatral condition, mair like a stage actress than an honest man's dochter—you might just as weel set me up for a—a—an Apollo !”

The idea of uncle Adam, with his long cross blue face and pyramidical peruke, personating the God of Day, diverted Lady Rossville so much that she laughed outright ; but he retained his inflexible severity of countenance, and seemed quite unconscious of the ridicule of such a supposition.

“ Well, since you don’t like the picture, you shall not be offended by it again,” said the Countess, laying her hand gently on his arm to lead him from the place ; “ you shall have another dressing-room to your apartment, and you have only to forget the way to this one.”

But uncle Adam now fixed himself opposite to the huntress queen, and, having carefully wiped and adjusted his spectacles, he contemplated her for some time without speaking ; at length, with a groan, he said,—

“ I’ll no say but what there may be something o’ a likeness in the face, when you come to consider it—there’s the brow, the bonny brent brow ——” then, kindling anew—“ but wha e’er saw her brow wi’ that senseless-like thing on the tap o’t ? They could nae pent her e’en, to be sure, for they might as weel hae tried to pent twa diamonds—the bit mouth’s no entirely unlike, but it has nae her bonny smile.” And uncle Adam gazed and commented, till he gradually lost sight of the moon and the bow, and all the offensive peculiarities of the sylvan goddess, and at length saw only the image of his long-loved Lizzie.

From that time the turret became his favourite

haunt ; and as he was there perfectly unmolested, and was left at liberty to follow his own devices, secure from even the interruptions of Miss Pratt, he remained tolerably quiescent. Every day, indeed, he made an attempt to break off, and return to his own comfortless abode, but every day he was overruled by Lady Rossville, whose influence over him was daily increasing, although he was perfectly unconscious of it, and would have spurned the idea of being influenced by anything but his own free will. But there was also another inducement for him to prolong his stay, which he would have been still more ashamed to have acknowledged. In a paroxysm of *ennui* one bad day, he had taken up the first volume of Guy Mannering, with little expectation of deriving either amusement or instruction from it ; but, once fairly entered upon it, he found himself compelled, *nolens volens*, to proceed, which he did, however, in the most secret and stealthy manner. Uncle Adam had been no novel reader even in his younger days, and with him as with many other excellent, but we must suppose mistaken people, novels and mental imbecillity were ideas inseparably united in his brain. Novel writers he had always conceived

to be born idiots, and novel readers he considered as something still lower in the scale of intellect. It was, therefore, with feelings of the deepest humiliation he found himself thus irresistibly carried along on a sort of *King's-cushion*, as it were, by Meg Merrilies and Dominic Sampson. Not that he traversed the pages with the swiftness of a modern reader—or that he read them probably with half the rapidity with which they were written—for he was one of those solid substantial readers who make what they read their own—he read and re-read, and paused and pondered—and often turned back, but never looked forward, even while experiencing the most intense anxiety as to the result—in short, uncle Adam's whole being was completely absorbed in this (to him) new creation, while, at the same time, he blushed even in private at his own weakness in filling his head with such idle havers, and, indeed, never could have held it up again if he had been detected with a volume in his hand.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Oh ! scene of fortune which dost fair appear
Only to men that stand not near !

COWLEY.

AND now visions of earthly bliss—of pomp—of power—of pleasure, began to float before those eyes, scarce dried from natural tears. But Gertrude had not now so much time as formerly to indulge in the idle day-dreams of romance. With her change of situation, the penalties of greatness came thronging upon her. Unthought-of claims upon her time—her talents—her attention, followed in rapid and never-ceasing succession ; and she found, with surprise and disappointment, that the boundless freedom she had so fondly anticipated as the attribute of power, was farther from her than ever. To *will*, indeed, was hers ; but how many obstacles intervene to the accomplishing of the will, even of the most absolute !

obstacles which conscience itself raises as barriers against the encroachments of self-indulgence and natural inclination ; and which, though as thin air to some, are as rocks of adamant to others. But Lady Rossville possessed a more powerful monitor than even conscience would have proved in the person of Edward Lyndsay. “ Une femme est aisée à gouverner,” says a French satirist, “ pourvu que ce soit un homme qui s’en donne la peine ;”—and the truth of the assertion Gertrude seemed in a fair way to realize. Ardent and enthusiastic in her nature, and as such always prone to fall into extremes, the sense of dependence she felt towards her cousin, as the only person on whose judgment and rectitude she could safely rely, would gradually have assumed the habit of implicit deference to most of his views and opinions ; not from conviction—for on many subjects they widely differed—but simply, because, like many other people, she loved to be directed in matters where her affections were not concerned, and was always ready to sacrifice her judgment, provided it did not interfere with her inclination. There is, indeed, much of luxury to an indolent, or a fanciful mind,

in thus casting its cares upon another, while it floats calmly along in undisturbed serenity, or abandons itself to the thick-coming fancies of its own imagination. In every situation of life, this disposition, alas ! has its dangers ; but how much more in those gifted ones, whom God has set on the high places of the earth ! But Mr Lyndsay was not a person to take advantage of this flexible form of mind. He had too much delicacy to assume any authority, or interfere in any department openly—too much honour to use his influence in an indirect or underhand manner. He aimed to guide her principles, not to direct her actions—to strengthen her mind, not to govern it ; but, above all, he strove to impress upon her the responsibility of the duties assigned her—the account which would one day be required of the talents committed to her. But such doctrine, even though uttered in the mildest and most persuasive accents, still sounded harsh to ears just opening to the blandishments of the world. Imagination had stretched a broad and flowery path in endless perspective before her, and she recoiled from that strait and narrow way which the Christian pilgrim has been commanded to tread.

Life—young life's enchanting scenes were now bursting on the sight in all their exquisite, but transient delusive beauty—and at that joyous season, when “ the common air, the earth, the skies,” seem to the exulting heart to breathe of “ opening Paradise,” how does it turn from the holy precepts—the solemn admonitions of Divine truth—as from that which would annihilate all that is delightful in existence !

So felt the child of prosperity, as she looked on all the pride of life, and, with the fallen cherub, was ready to exclaim—

“ O earth, how like to Heaven, if not preferr'd !”

But with all her faults—and they were many—Gertrude was not one of those selfish sordid spirits, whose enjoyments centre solely in their own gratification. Her nature was lofty, and her disposition generous ; but her virtue was impulse—her generosity profusion. She wished to diffuse happiness around her, and she imagined she had only to scatter money with a lavish hand, and it would necessarily spring up, bearing the fruits of peace, and love, and virtue, and joy. Like all enthusiastic novices, her schemes of philanthropy—

if schemes they might be called, which plan had none—were upon the most magnificent scale; and it was with mortification she beheld her baseless fabrics melt away beneath the plain practical results of Mr Lyndsay's rational benevolence. Schools were the only establishments for which she could obtain his concurrence, and even there she thought his ideas much too humble. A plain school-house was an odious frightful thing—she must positively have it elegant, if not expensive, and the children must be all prettily dressed;—and she drew a design for the building, and invented a uniform for the children, both so classical and so *unique*, that she was all impatience to behold these models of her taste and fancy realized.

There was another object which Gertrude was still more anxious to accomplish, and that was to make the happiness of William Leslie and Anne Black, by providing him with a church. But the one for which her cousin had applied had been given away by Lord Rossville, and there was no immediate prospect of another vacancy occurring. Even Mr Lyndsay could not assist her here, for his interest was already deeply engaged; but he

was little less desirous than herself of befriending a young man, whose amiable character, evangelical doctrine, and mild attractive manners, were more powerful recommendations than aught that rank and beauty could have urged.

Matters were in this state when Anne accompanied her father and mother one day on a visit of condolence to Rossville. While Miss Pratt, as usual, did the honours of the mansion to the seniors of the party, Lady Rossville took her cousin apart to converse with her on the subject; for, although too modest and diffident to make a direct application, there was an anxious appeal in her pensive countenance that could not be misunderstood. She at once frankly owned, that the cause of her dejection proceeded from the apparent hopelessness of her prospects.

“ But is the want of a church really the only obstacle to your union ?” inquired Gertrude.

“ Alas, no !” said her cousin mournfully ; “ my father and mother, and indeed my whole family, oppose it now more than ever, because of the superior establishments my sisters have got ; and they talk of the degradation I am bringing upon them all by such a poor connection, till I am

sometimes ready to give it up in despair—and so I would, were it only my own happiness that is at stake—*that* I would willingly sacrifice to theirs—but William loves me so truly, and has loved me so long—ever since we were children—and to give him up now, I am sure would break both our hearts.” Here Anne dropt some natural tears, but wiped them soon, and, in a firmer tone, added—“ But I am wrong—very wrong, to give way to such desponding thoughts—if it is God’s will we shall yet be happy in his good time—and if he sees good to disappoint us, I trust we shall both be able from our hearts to say, His will be done !”

Gertrude was for an instant smote with the difference of her cousin’s sentiments from her own—her meek submission—her humble acquiescence seemed as a reproach to the wayward feelings of her own rebellious heart—but quickly she dispelled the gathering conviction—“ She cannot love as I do,” thought she, “ or she could not reason thus—her’s may be virtue, but it is not love.”

CHAPTER XXX.

Thy house and pleasing wife !

HORACE.

THE snow had now disappeared—the waters had subsided—the air was soft for the season—the cloudy welkin had cleared up into a fleecy dappled sky, and sanguine spirits deemed that winter was past and gone. For, in the quaint words of Cuddy, in the Shepherd's Calendar,

“ When the shining sun laugheth once,
You deem the spring is come at once.”

Even the faintest breath of spring brings pleasure to all whose hearts are not seared, and whose bodies are not iron. We feel as if we were about to renew our existence—the opening skies seem to smile upon us as they did in the days of our youth, and again their bland influence steals upon our senses. Again we cast away the cares and

the griefs of the world, with its clouds and its storms, and again spring up in our numbed hearts,

“Hopes that are angels in their birth,
But perish young, like things of earth !”

But it is not every one who owns such influences. Amongst the inmates of Rossville Castle a fine day produced its pleasures, but they were of a different nature. Mrs St Clair liked it that she might take an airing in state, and, accordingly, set forth in all the pomp of a stately equipage. Lady Betty liked the sun, because it would shine upon fat Flora, who was sent out to profit by it. Miss Pratt having rummaged every creek and cranny in the interior of the house, took advantage of it, to look about her a little without doors, to see what abuses she could detect. Uncle Adam having seen Dandie Dinmont and Dumble safe home, closed his book, and crept away with his hands behind his back to take a saunter. Lady Rossville, taking Mr Lyndsay's arm, set out as she had done on many a worse day, to mark the progress of the improvements she had begun—to accelerate, if possible, by her impatience, the

building of her school-house, and to visit some of the cottages of her poor, with whose ways and wants she was now beginning to make herself acquainted.

Her romantic expectation of finding elegant distress in mud cabins was now gradually dwindling away, for wherever she went, she met only the homeliness of matter-of-fact poverty.

Gratitude, and respect, and blessings, indeed, were hers, for how easy is it for the great to make themselves beloved by the poor—how cheap the purchase of the best feelings of humanity! Gertrude was new to the luxury of doing good, and her heart would swell, and her eyes fill with tears, as the trembling hand of age was raised to Heaven to call down its blessings on her head—and she could look, almost with pleasure, on the children her bounty had clothed, even though their features were coarse, and their dialect uncouth.

In the course of her domiciliary visits, she found herself at the door of the cottage she had visited the memorable morning after her arrival at Rossville; and, somewhat curious to know the state of affairs there, she was about to enter, when, at that moment, uncle Adam was descried

approaching. They waited till he came up, and then invited him to join in the visit, which, after a little humming and hawing, he agreed to do.

The door was hard and fast shut, but, upon knocking, it was banged open by our *ci-devant* friend, the dame of the stoups, who immediately recognised, and most cordially welcomed her former visitor.

“Eh ! my Leddy, is this you ?—I ax your pardon, my Leddy, but I really didna ken weel wha you was the first time you was here—just come foret, my Leddy—just stap in ower, Sir—dinna be feared, my Leddy, just gang in bye,” &c. &c. &c. and carefully closing the door against the breath of Heaven, she ushered her guests into the dark precincts of her foul-aired smoky cabin. A press-bed, with a bit of blue checked stuff hanging down, denoted that the poor sufferer had now exchanged his seat by the fire for his bed, and the chair, which he had formerly occupied, stood with its back to the fire, covered with clothes, apparently drying.

“How does your husband do ?” inquired Lady Rossville.

“Oo, ’dced, my Leddy, he’s just quite silly-

wise," responded the dame in a whining melancholy key ; " he just lies there snottering awa'," pointing to the bed.

" Is he confined to bed ?" asked Mr Lyndsay.

" No—no, Sir, he's no confined ony ways—he gets up whiles, but 'deed it's no aye convenient for me to hae him up ; for, as I tell him, what can he do when he *is* up ?—for he's no fit to put his hand to ony thing—and he's mair oot o' the way there, than he wad be ony place else."

" More out of the way of regaining health certainly," said Mr Lyndsay.

" Health, Sir !" interrupted the hostess ; " 'deed he'll ne'er hae health as lang as he lives—he's just been drabble dragglen on these twuntie month by Martimas—I'm sure I've had a weary time o't wi' him, and noo I canna g't a hand's turn maist done for him—the hoose an' aw thing's just gawin' to destruction ; and, I'm sure, I really think shame o' mysel'," surveying two large dirty arms from top to toe ; " an' there's the weans, puir things, gawin' in perfect rags, for I ne'er can get a steek put in either to their duds or my ain."

Here the voice of the sick man was heard in a faint accent, calling the gudewife.

“That’s just the way he gangs on, my Laddy—he just lies there and yelps—yelps—yelps even on for me.—What is’t noo?” in her loudest sharpest key, as she banged up to the bed. “A drink? I wonder ye hac nae mair sense, man, than to ask for a drink the noo, when her Laddyship’s here, an’ Maister Lyndsay an’ aw speerin’ for you.”

Mr Lyndsay here took up a jug of water, which was standing on the top of a chest by the bed-side, and held it to the sick man’s lips—but the reproof was thrown away, or rather misconstrued by his soothing helpmate.

“Oh, Sir, I think shame o’ your takin’ sae muckle trouble—for he’s just like a bairn—he’s aye wantin’ something or anither, and he’s just lost aw discretion thegither—I wonder you dinna think shame o’ yoursel’,” to her husband—“when ye see the fashery you mak’.”

Mr Lyndsay, meanwhile, having felt the invalid’s pulse, began to put a few queries to him, touching his complaint.

“Have you much thirst?” asked he.

“ O, Sir, he wad drink the very ocean an let him.”

“ Pray, let him speak for himself,” said Lyndsay, again putting the question to the patient, who seemed so unused to the privilege, that he was evidently at a loss how to make use of it.

“ Have you any pain in your head ?”

“ ’Deed, Sir, I dinna think he has muckle pain in his heed, though he compleens o’t whiles ; but, as I often tell him, I wiss he had my back. I’m sure I’ve a pain whiles atween my shouthers, Sir,——” rolling a huge, fat, strong-looking back as she spoke.

“ I shall attend to your pains some other time, if you will be so good as keep them quiet for the present,” said Lyndsay ; then once more turning to the sick man, he asked whether he had pain or weakness in his limbs, that prevented him from rising.

“ I’m sure I dinna ken what it is,” again interposed the incorrigible matron. “ He canna be sair, I’m positive o’ that, for there’s naething like an income aboot him—oo no—no, no, Sir,—he’s aye keepit a hale skin, and that’s a great mercy.

He's very silly, to be sure, but that canna be helpit, ye ken."

"Do you never allow your husband to answer for himself?" asked Mr Lyndsay, at a loss whether to laugh or be provoked at this intolerable woman.

"Oo, Sir, I'm sure he's walcome to speak for me; but, 'tweel I dinna think he kens very weel what till say, or what it is that ails him.—Tam,"—shouting into his ear—"the leddy wants to hear an you can speak ony. Canna ye thank her for the braw claise and the siller she gied you?"

"Should not you like to be up—out of bed?" asked Gertrude, now trying her skill to extract an answer; but before he had time to reply, his mouth-piece again took up the word.

"Up, my Liddy! 'Deed he just craik craiks to be up, and than whan he's up, he craik craiks to be down; an' it wad be very inconvenient for to ha'e him up the day, for you see," pointing to the clothes that were spread over the chairs,—
"the fire's aw tane up wi' his dead-claise that I was gi'en an air to; for they had got unco dampish-wise wi' the wat wather; an' I'm thinkin' he'll no be lang o' wantin' them neo; and this is siccan

a bonny day, I thought, what atween the fire and the sun, they wad be sure to get a gude toast."

Uncle Adam had hitherto practised a degree of forbearance which had scarcely a parallel in his whole life and conversation; but, indeed, from the moment the dame had first opened her lips, he had felt that words would be weak weapons to have recourse to, and that nothing less than smiting could at all satisfy his outraged feelings. Luckily at this moment she was not within reach of his arm, otherwise it is to be feared his wrath would have vented itself, not in thin air, but in solid blows. As it was, he at length burst forth like a volcano, with

"Airing the honest man's dead-claise, when the breath's in his body yet! Ye're bauld to treat a living man as ye wad a sweel'd corpse, and turn his very hooss into a kirk-yard! How daur ye set up your face to keep him frae his ain fire-side for ony o' your dead duds?"

And snatching up the paraphernalia, so ostentatiously displayed, he thrust the whole into the fire—"There—that'll gie them a gude toast for you!" said he, and as they broke into a blaze he quitted the cabin.

“ Eh, Sirs ! the bonny claise that cost sac muckle siller !” sobbed the mistress in an hysterical tone, as she made an ineffectual effort to save them ; “ the ill-faur’d carle that he is, to tak upon him for to set low to ony honest man’s wundin’-sheet !”

Lady Rossville was confounded ; for, as she but imperfectly comprehended the pith of the parley that had taken place, the action appeared to her, as, indeed, it was, perfectly outrageous, and her purse was instantly opened to repair this breach of law and justice. But Lyndsay could scarcely keep from laughing at the tragi-comic scene that had just taken place. From his knowledge of the character and modes of thinking of the Scottish peasantry, he was not at all surprised at the gudewife’s preparations ;—but while she was engrossed with her attempts to redeem some bits of the linen from the flames, he took the opportunity of carrying on his colloquy with the husband.

“ So I see your wife does not attempt to conceal from you the danger you are in,” said he.

“ Na, na,” said the invalid, perking up,

“ what fore wad she do that ?—they wad na be a true freend that wad hide a man’s danger frae him—we’re aw ready enough to hide it frae oursel’s, and forget the care o’ our ain immortal sowl’s.”

“ You have seen your minister, then, I suppose ?”

“ Oo aye, honest man ! he ca’s in nows and thans, and muckle edification I get frae him ;”—then calling to his dame, he began to comfort her for the loss she had sustained, as though it had been her own holiday suit.

“ What a shocking woman !” exclaimed Gertrude, as they quitted the cottage ; “ how worse than unfeeling to have prepared her husband’s dead-clothes, and have them even displayed before his eyes in that manner !”

“ She certainly is not a favourable specimen of a Scotch gudewife,” answered Mr Lyndsay ; “ but I have seen the most affectionate wife talk of the death of her husband, even while administering to his wants with the greatest solicitude—but they are much less sophisticated in their ideas upon these subjects than we are—they

would think it highly wrong to use any deception at such a time."

"But how shocking to hear one's death talked of as inevitable——"

"But they do not talk of it in that manner—they believe that all things are possible with God—they send for the doctor as they do for the minister, and pray for a blessing on the means used—they leave all in the hand of God. I have seen many on their death-beds in various circumstances, and I have always found that they who were in the habit of hearing of death and eternity—of conversing with their ministers and religious people—have, generally speaking, looked forward to death with resignation and composure."

"I can, indeed, easily imagine," said Lady Rossville, "that the poor man we have just left must look forward to Heaven with great complacency, were it only to be rid of that tormenting creature, and out of that vile smoky cabin."

"A smoky house and a scolding wife have, indeed, always been looked upon as the *ne plus ultra* of human misery; but that is only amongst the rich—when you have seen more of the poor, you will be satisfied there are still greater evils—

you are still a novice in the miseries of life, Gertrude."

"Perhaps so, and yet——" she stopped and sighed, and they proceeded homewards in silence.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Shee hath forgott how many a woeful stowre
For him she late endured ; she speaks no more
Of past ; true is it that true love hath no powre
To looken backe.—

SPENSER.

ALL must have felt what it is in this ungenial clime to part with a fine day. It seems as though we were bidding farewell to some long lost friend, and we love to watch even with pensive regret the last rays of the softly sinking sun, as we would trace the lingering steps of some loved one, who it may be long ere we behold again.

“ Fatigued as I am, still I must enjoy this lovely day to the last,” said Lady Rossville, as they approached the Castle, and she threw herself on a garden chair that stood upon the lawn ; “ it is one that sends such a ‘ summer feeling to the heart,’ that I feel as though I were a better being, while sitting here listening to the faint

notes of that sweet thrush, than I should be shut up in the drawing-room with Lady Betty and Miss Pratt."

"It is much more agreeable at least," said Lyndsay also seating himself—"as to its being more amiable and virtuous, I fear, I may scarcely lay that flattering unction to my soul. I am apt to distrust myself since——"

"Since when?" asked the Countess.

"Since I knew you, Gertrude."

This seemed rather to have burst from his lips involuntarily, than to have been uttered deliberately; and there was something in the tone which made Gertrude start, as a vague suspicion darted across her mind that Lyndsay loved her. But she had scarcely time to admit the idea, ere it was as quickly dispelled; for, when she turned to look on him, the earnest expression with which he had been regarding her, fled: and, in a gay manner, he added—

"I flattered myself, I had been an infinitely wiser, better, and more respectable person than I find I am—for I begin to feel myself, under your influence, gradually sinking into a soft, simple, neat-handed, somewhat melancholic sort of a *souffre*

douleur ; and, if I stay much longer with you, I must provide myself with a flute and a silk dressing-gown—and then ——”

“ What, then ?” asked Lady Rossville, laughingly.

“ Why, then, you must promise to look upon me as a very interesting creature ; and I will stand, or sit, half the night at my open window playing love-lorn ditties, that will cause, as Gray says, the very cat to wring its hands.”

“ Well, I shall provide the silk dressing-gown and the flute—but for the lady and the cat, you must find these for yourself.”

“ But these will be only a small part of the stock in hand necessary for me to commence business with. I must be able to write sonnets upon every occasion—often upon no occasion at all. I must be able to take the most correct and striking likenesses without a single sitting ——”

“ ’Tis time you had begun to practise that part of your profession, certainly,” said Gertrude. “ Do you remember how long ago it is since you promised to draw my picture ?—Pray, begin now—I have nothing else to do ; and this lovely setting sun will invest me with a little of his ra-

diance, and soften down all my uglinesses :—see how beautiful every thing looks in its light.”

“ But, you know, I warned you I never flattered in my portraits—mine profess to be ‘ truth severe’—cold, dry, hard fac-similes, without a single Claud Lorraine tint.”

“ No matter, let me see myself such as I am, or at least appear to my friends.”

“ Well, not to shock you at the very outset, I must say you appear to me to love truth, and to be sincere in the search of it—but you have some pride and a little obstinacy to prevent your arriving at it ; then, your fancy is too lively to permit you to take the right way, and while you are under its fantastic dominion, you will never judge correctly.”

“ Not very flattering, certainly,” said the Countess, affecting to laugh—“ ‘ is just not ugly, and is just not mad,’ seems to be the amount of your panegyric—but, pray go on.”

“ You do not want penetration, but you form your opinions too hastily ; you will be accused of inconsistency and caprice, but unjustly ; you will only be undeceived——”

“ I seem to have got into the hands of a for-

tune-teller rather than a portrait-painter," said Lady Rossville, somewhat pettishly, "and as I never listen to predictions that bode me no good, I'll none of yours—'tis an idle art, and no coming events shall cast their shadows upon me.—Come, this is enough for one sitting, you shall have another to-morrow, when, perhaps, you will do me, such as I *am*, not as I *may* be."

"To-morrow I must leave you," said Lyndsay.

"No, pray do not talk of leaving me," cried Gertrude quickly; "What will become of me when you are gone? I shall have no one being, with whom I can have any companionship—no one to talk with—no one to read with—no one to sing with—no one to walk with—no one to teach me any good thing—my dear cousin, say you will not leave me?"

But Lyndsay shook his head.

"Come, Zoe," to a little Italian greyhound that lay at her feet, "do you join your pretty little entreaties to mine," and she made it assume a begging attitude. The dog was a gift from Delmour, and Lyndsay turned away his eyes.

"I must be gone," said he.

“Nay, rather say shall, or will be gone,” cried the Countess pettishly ; “I do not believe there is any must in the matter—you are your own master, free to go or stay as you yourself incline.”

“Even were it so—do not be so much of a spoiled child, Gertrude, as to quarrel with your friend, merely because he has, what it is said all men have, and some women too, a will of his own.”

“But I have more than once, of late, sacrificed mine to Mr Lyndsay’s,” said Gertrude coldly

“But were I to sacrifice my will, I must, at the same time, sacrifice my conscience along with it,” said Lyndsay ; “or, rather to confess the truth, they are somewhat at variance upon this occasion ; the one urges me to stay—the other warns me to be gone.”

“The conscience may be mistaken as well as the will sometimes,” said Gertrude ; “in this matter I suspect yours is, otherwise it would have told you how much good you may do by remaining here.”

“No—it never tells me such flattering tales ; that is the province of hope or fancy, and sometimes, perhaps, I may have been weak enough to

listen to their idle tales ——” he stopped in some emotion, and, for an instant, fixed his eyes on Gertrude’s face ; but if his words had any particular meaning, it was not caught by her, for not the slightest change was perceptible on her speaking countenance. “ If I thought I could be of any real service to you, I would remain here even at the sacrifice of my own ——” happiness was on his lips, but he checked himself, and substituted “ time; but I have no right to interfere in the only way where I might be of use, and I cannot linger on for an indefinite time as a sort of spy upon the actions of others. You require protection, I know, and are now in a situation to claim it; choose, then, guardians for yourself, or allow the law to appoint them for you.”

To think and to speak were commonly one and the same thing with Gertrude, and she instantly exclaimed,—

“ Then I shall choose you for one of my guardians.”

“ Choose me !” exclaimed Lyndsay, in astonishment, “ No, that cannot be.”

“ Why not? I know nobody I should like so much to have for my guardian.—I am sure you

would never scold me or lecture me, however naughty I might be——Now, don't—pray don't propose to me any of your old cross things, with round wigs, and square buckles, and long pockets, who would preach me a sermon upon every five pound note I squandered."

"Such guardians are scarcely to be met with now, except upon the stage," said Lyndsay smiling.

"Perhaps the wigs and pockets—but the long faces and long lectures, I fear, prevail every where. I must know the person before I can put myself in such jeopardy."

"You may be in greater jeopardy, Gertrude," said her cousin gravely.

Lady Rossville blushed—she saw to what he alluded; and, after a pause, she said, in some emotion,—

"The danger which you seem to apprehend no longer exists—the person whose audacious behaviour to me you twice resented, is no more—he has perished at sea." And she recapitulated the account of the shipwreck, and her mother's testimony, confirming the fate of Lewiston.

"So far, then, I shall leave you with a light-

ened mind," said Lyndsay ; " there seems no more to apprehend from that quarter at least.—If there are other dangers——"

But at that moment a post-chaise and four, the horses in a foam, came driving up the avenue full speed.

" Who can this be ?" exclaimed Lady Rossville ;—then as the thought flashed upon her that it might be Colonel Delmour, she started up—her heart beat violently—her colour went and came—she would have moved towards the house, but her agitation was so great she sunk upon the seat, while her eyes remained fixed upon the carriage. It drew up at the castle gate, and scarcely had it stopped, when the person from within burst open the door, and Colonel Delmour himself sprung out, with such impetuosity, that it was but a single glance could be caught of him as he rushed into the house—but that was enough. Again Gertrude rose, but, ashamed of her emotion, she could not lift her eyes to Lyndsay's, or she would have seen that he was little less agitated than herself—she could only accept of the arm he offered her, and in silence they proceeded together towards the house.

As they entered the hall, the voice of one of the servants was heard, as, in reply to an interrogatory, " Her Ladyship has been out for some hours with Mr Lyndsay ;" and at that instant, Colonel Delmour, with a hurried step and agitated air, rushed from the saloon. Joy, fear, doubt, displeasure, love, a thousand mingled emotions were all struggling in Gertrude's breast—she tried to withdraw her arm from Lyndsay's, but she only clung the more helplessly to him, while he felt her increasing weight, and feared she would have fallen to the ground.

" Lady Rossville is fatigued with her walk," said he, addressing Colonel Delmour, and mastering his own agitation at sight of hers ; " a glass of water here quickly," to the half-dozen of servants who stood idly lounging in the hall, and the whole instantly vanished in all the bustle and importance of their bearing. But, mortified and ashamed of this display of her weakness, the Countess instantly regained, in some degree, her self-possession. Even while her heart beat high, and her whole frame trembled with excessive emotion, she said, with a lofty air,—

“ I have to apologize to Colonel Delmour for this uncourteous reception on his return to——”

At that moment, Lyndsay taking the water from the servant presented it to her himself, in the manner of one privileged to render those little attentions.

“ Desire my carriage to wait,” cried Delmour, in a loud and passionate voice, as it was driving away.

Lady Rossville was now nerved to perfect self-command, and, with a blush of offended dignity, she passed on to the saloon, where sat only Lady Betty, still lost in wonder at her nephew’s sudden appearance and no less sudden flight. Lyndsay’s indignation had been excited by the rudeness and violence of Colonel Delmour’s address, but anger with him was at most but a transient feeling, and a moment after they had entered the saloon, he held out his hand to him in a friendly manner. But the other turned hastily on his heel, and paced the room with disordered step, utterly regardless of the questions Lady Betty continued to pour out upon him. At length approaching Gertrude, he said, “ I would speak with Lady Rossville alone.”

For a moment the Countess hesitated at the

abruptness of the demand, and her pride revolted at the manner in which it was made ; but she rose, and with an inclination of the head, led the way to another apartment. Colonel Delmour followed, when, having shut the door,—

“ Gertrude,” cried he, as he seized her hands, while his own shook with the violence of his emotion ; “ now speak my doom—from your own lips only will I hear it—say but the word—tell me I have been deceived—forgotten—forsaken ?”

“ O, no—no—never !” exclaimed Gertrude giving way to tears, as her resentment began to subside at sight of her lover’s anguish.

“ Call it what you will then—but do not rack me by equivocating. Already I have endured tortures for your sake, that worlds would not have bribed me to undergo—despair itself would have been a blessing, compared to these distracting doubts.”

“ ’Tis I who have had cause to doubt,” said the Countess, as she seated herself at a table, and shaded her eyes with her hand, ashamed of the tenderness her tears betrayed for one, whose constancy she had such cause to question.

“ You, who have had cause to doubt !” cried

Delmour impetuously ; “ *could* you then doubt me, Gertrude ? ”

“ Had I not cause ?—Why was I left at such a time, when a single word from you —— ”

“ Would have consigned you for ever to poverty and obscurity—Is it not so ? You would have been mine, had I been base and selfish enough to have plunged you in ruin—to have sacrificed your happiness to my own ! ”

“ Ah ! by what a degrading standard did you measure my happiness, if you thought pomp and wealth could ever compensate for broken vows—for a deceived heart ?—you would have renounced me ! ”

“ No, by Heavens, I would not—I will not—but, yes—you are right, I would—I *will* renounce you, Gertrude, if by doing so, I can insure your happiness, it matters not though mine be a wreck.”

Lady Rossville spoke not—her heart heaved with emotion—and Colonel Delmour leaning against the chimney-piece, contemplated her for some moments without speaking : at length, taking her passive hand, he seated himself on the

sofa by her, then, in a voice calmed into tenderness, he said—

“ Gertrude, there was a time when not had an angel spoke, should I have believed that ought on earth could ever have induced me to resign this hand—and even now worlds should not wrest it from me—but, fickle—faithless as you are, why should I seek to retain it ?”

“ Release me, Colonel Delmour,” cried the Countess, in a voice choking with emotion—“ I have not deserved—I will not listen, to such language,” and she struggled to withdraw her hand.

“ Yet, hear me one moment—my fate is on your lips—tell me that our vows are cancelled, and, in doing so, seal my doom.”

But Gertrude spoke not.

“ Gertrude—in spite of all—dearest—most beloved—I cannot resign you, but with my dying breath—why do you impose upon me so cruel a sacrifice ?” He unclasped the hand in which he had held hers locked—“ Why suffer your hand to remain for an instant in mine ?—Gertrude, you are free !”

Lady Rossville slowly withdrew it, then raising her head, she shook off the tears which gemmed

her eyes, and cast on him a look which spoke all the confiding tenderness of her soul,—then, replacing her hand within his, she turned away her head, to hide the blush that mantled her cheek.

CHAPTER XXXII.

O Jove ! Why hast thou given us certain proof
To know adulterate gold ; but stamp'd no mark
Where it is needed most—on man's base metal ?

EURIPIDES.

LYNDSAY passed the intervening time in a state of feverish excitement very foreign to his natural equanimity of mind. That he loved Gertrude he could no longer conceal from himself ; but his love was not of that violent yet contracted nature, which had sought merely to engross and appropriate her affections exclusively to himself. He had proposed a nobler aim—a purer gratification ; as his love was without idolatry, so was it free from selfishness. He had not sought to undermine her affections—he had aimed at elevating and ennobling them by extending their sphere beyond the narrow, perishable limits of human

attachment ; and he had hoped that a mind so pure, so lofty, so generous as hers, might yet become enamoured of virtue—might yet be saved from uniting itself with a nature so unworthy of its love. And now was the test ; on this interview her fate seemed suspended. Her emotion at sight of Colonel Delmour had, indeed, evinced the power he still retained over her, but that power might be urged too far. Though Gertrude was soft and feminine in her feelings, yet her spirit was high, and ever ready to rise against violence and injustice ; and thus the tie, which a tenderer hand could not have unloosed, might, by his own impetuosity, be broken. Such were the hopes and fears that alternately rushed over Lyndsay's heart, as he waited, in an agony of impatience, the result of the conference, his eyes fixed immoveably upon the door which led to the adjoining apartment. Their usually soft benign expression had given way to dark and troubled melancholy, and Lady Betty's questions fell unheeded on his ear. At length, the door opened, and the first glance sufficed to show Lyndsay that his doom and hers were sealed. Gertrude's eyes were still moist with tears, 'tis true—but there was a smile on

her lip—a flush of joy on her cheek—a lightness in her step—an ærial grace diffused over her whole face and figure—that told a tale of reconciled love, and seemed as though Happiness itself were embodied in a mortal form. All had been explained, and explanations were received as proofs of holy writ—for what imperfect evidence suffices where the heart is willing to believe ! Colonel Delmour told a tale of suffering—he told of the agonizing alternative that had been offered to him to make her his, and, in doing so, to make her, at the same time, an outcast from the home of her fathers—to reduce her to poverty and want :—he told her of the struggles of his mind—of the menacing fears—the half-formed resolutions—the desperate thoughts which had harassed his fancy, and destroyed his peace by day—the horrid dreams—the agonizing forms which had haunted his couch by night—till at length nature sunk under the conflict, and a violent fever ensued. No sooner was he sufficiently recovered to encounter the voyage, than, unable longer to endure this state of suspense, and yet still more unable to come to any

decision until he had seen her, he formed the resolution of returning to Britain, be the consequences what they might, of sounding the depths of her affection, and of receiving his sentence from her own lips. The voyage proved tedious and hazardous, and, on landing, he proceeded direct to London. He had there heard, for the first time, of the death of Lord Rossville; and his brother, at the same time, made known to him his rejection by the Countess, and the fact, that her marriage with Edward Lyndsay was a settled point, and was to take place as soon as propriety admitted. Almost maddened at this intelligence, he had thrown himself into a post-chaise, and travelled night and day till he had arrived there, when his worst fears were confirmed by the answer he received to his inquiry for her, as well as from the footing she appeared to be upon with Lyndsay.

This was Colonel Delmour's way of telling his own story, and it was correct in everything save the *motives*. "What's done we fairly may compute," but who can trace actions to their source? who can fathom the depths of the human heart, or

discern those secret springs, which, although they send forth waters alike pure to the eye, are yet as the issues of life and death? Colonel Delmour had told a tale, which in every circumstance was true, and yet the colouring was false. He had ascribed to disinterested affection what, in reality, proceeded from self-interest; for although he assuredly did love, it was love compounded of such base materials as adversity, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, would soon have shivered to atoms. But she saw nothing of all this, and she gave her tears—her faith—her love to him, whom she thought more than worthy of them all. His looks too seemed to confirm his words, for he looked thin, and pale, and harassed; but as the cloud cleared away from his brow, and the traces of passion, which had disfigured his fine features, disappeared, that gave him an interest in her eyes, which more than atoned for the want of more dazzling attributes.

On her part, Gertrude could also have told much, but 'tis woman's part to suffer, man's privilege to speak on those occasions, and while Colonel Delmour poured forth the history of his feelings in all the eloquence of excitement, it was

plain to see that he touched an answering chord in her heart, and that she too had endured all that he expressed. But, now that the storm was past, the sunshine of the soul was theirs, only varied according to the different natures from which it emanated; and as Lyndsay beheld the April-like joy that beamed in Gertrude's face, and met the haughty exulting glance of Delmour, he, for a moment, closed his eyes, as though he could also have closed his heart against the conviction, that Gertrude was lost to him—lost to the higher, happier destiny, that he had fondly traced out for her.

“What's taking you away in such a hurry, Frederick?” asked Lady Betty, laying down her book and her spectacles on their entrance.

“I only came in haste, and have no intention of returning the same way,” answered he with a smile of meaning to the Countess, then ringing the bell, he gave orders to discharge his carriage.

“Where did you come from to-day?” was Lady Betty's second interrogatory.

“That I really cannot tell, having travelled day and night since I landed at Falmouth, their

boundaries are not very accurately defined in my mind, or my mind's eye either."

"What was the need of that?" demanded her Ladyship. "Had you heard of your good uncle's death?"

"In London, where I only stopped half an hour."

"Did you see your brother? Did he tell you that he had given up the election? Did your mother and sisters tell you that?"

"I did—he did—they did—let us have done."

"And what was the nonsense of your posting down then?"

"To put a stop to absurd pretensions," answered Colonel Delmour with a sort of insolent *nonchalance*, as he looked at Mr Lyndsay.

"But do you think you'll succeed?"

Colonel Delmour smiled a smile of haughty disdain, Lady Rossville coloured, and Lyndsay, looking steadily at him, said calmly—

"I have heard of no absurd pretensions—none who had not, at least, an equal right to try their merits if they had thought proper."

Ere Colonel Delmour could utter the scornful retort which had risen to his lips, the door opened,

and uncle Adam walked in, with his antique peruke, and blue boot-hose—for he had now got so tame, that he had learnt to walk the house at all hours of the day. He was not aware of the arrival of a stranger, otherwise he would certainly have skulked till the last moment—if, indeed, he would not actually have fled the country to his own city of refuge in Barnford.

Colonel Delmour surveyed him for a moment from head to foot with unfeigned astonishment, when Lady Rossville introduced him as her uncle, Mr Ramsay. He then quickly recovering himself, saluted him with a bow, twice repeated, so condescendingly profound, and with such an air of high breeding, as formed a ludicrous contrast to uncle Adam's awkward, repulsive gait, and dry uncouth manner. The latter possessed too much tact not to feel what was implied, and that such lofty courtesy only betokened one, "proud enough to be humble," and a new stock of wrath began to ferment within him—that on hand having previously been disposed of at the expence of Dame Lowrie's dead-clothes. For the first time, Lady Rossville blushed for her relation, but ashamed to show that she was asham-

ed, she hastened to make some remark to him on the scene they had witnessed in the cottage ; then, as if afraid to hear him answer, she went on—
“ But I must tell the story, and my cousin Lyndsay will help me in my Scotch ;” and with her musical voice, and refined accents, she attempted to take off the barbarous dialect of the cottars ; but when she came to the *denouement*, uncle Adam burst out with “ The impudent thief ! She deserved to hae been sent the same gate as her duds !”

Colonel Delmour absolutely stared, and that was a great deal for a man like Colonel Delmour to do. Lady Rossville, covered with confusion, tried to laugh, but the thought that Colonel Delmour was shocked with her uncle made it rather a difficult matter. Luckily, at that moment, her servant entered to say that Mrs St Clair had returned from her airing, and begged to see her ladyship immediately. The Countess rose to obey the summons. Colonel Delmour attended her to the door, pressed her hand, whispered some soft nothing in her ear, to which she replied with a blush and a smile, then calling his servant, said he should go to dress, while she repaired to her mother’s apartment.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

O ! how this spring of love resembleth
'Th' uncertain glory of an April day ;
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by-and bye a cloud takes all away.

SHAKESPEARE.

“ WHAT is this I hear ?” was the exclamation that greeted Gertrude on her entrance. “ Is it possible that Colonel Delmour has had the effrontery to come to this house ? Is it credible that you have had the weakness to receive him under your roof after what has passed ?”

“ I know nothing that ought to render Colonel Delmour an unsuitable or an unwelcome guest in my house,” answered the Countess, endeavouring to speak calmly and decidedly.

“ Then you do not know that as the poor, dependent Gertrude St Clair, he slighted, disowned, and in a manner rejected you ; and that now, as Countess of Rossville, he flies to you, worships

you, would marry you? Is it not so, and did I not foretell how it would be?"

"While we view Colonel Delmour's conduct in such different lights, 'tis impossible we should agree. Mama, I beseech you, say no more. I am satisfied—completely—perfectly satisfied, that he has acted all along from the noblest and most disinterested motives."

"How has he proved that? Who is there credulous enough to believe his averments of disinterested affection?—Why should they be believed? What right has he to expect such monstrous credulity?"

"The right which every generous mind feels it has upon the faith and confidence of another."

"Gertrude, your words are those of a child—I may say, of a fool. Who else could be weak enough to credit assertions contradicted by the whole tenor of the man's conduct?"

"Be it so then!" cried Lady Rossville, vainly struggling to retain her composure; "I am a child—a fool—for I believe in Colonel Delmour's truth and honour. The prejudices of the whole world would not shake my conviction."

"And what is to be the consequences of your

madness? Will you dare to brave my authority, and marry him against my consent?" cried Mrs St Clair, giving way to one of her transports of passion. Lady Rossville remained silent. "Speak, I desire you," continued she, with increasing impetuosity; "I repeat, will you *dare* to marry him against my consent?"

"Mama, I have twice solemnly passed my word to you, that I will not marry until I have attained the age of twenty-one."

"If you would have me to trust to that, then, till that period arrives, dismiss your lover—this very day let Colonel Delmour leave your house, and leave you free:—consent to that, and I will believe you sincere."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Countess in agitation.—"How can you require of me to act in such a manner?"

"Then leave it to me. I am the fittest person to act for you in this matter. I will see Colonel Delmour myself;" and she was moving towards the door, when Gertrude laid her hand upon her arm, and, with a cheek coloured with resentment, exclaimed—"If my friends are to be turned from under my roof, then is my own house no

longer a habitation for me.—I will seek another home—other protection.”

Mrs St Clair turned pale with passion, and, in a voice almost suffocated, she said—“ In the meantime, I *command* you, by the duty you owe me, to confine yourself to your own apartment for the present—Do not think to brave my power—I still possess it, and will use it.”

There are bounds, beyond which passion cannot go, without counteracting its own purpose ; and Mrs St Clair had scarcely uttered the words, when she was sensible she had gone too far to be obeyed. Lady Rossville instantly became calm, but it was not the calm of fear or of submission, but that of settled determination, as she bent her head in silent acquiescence, and, without uttering a syllable, was about to withdraw.

“ Stay—where—what do you mean ?” cried her mother, interrupting her in her progress to the door.

“ To obey,” answered Lady Rossville, calmly.

“ Gertrude, why—why do you drive me to such extremities ?”

“ ’Tis I who am driven to extremities, God

help me !” exclaimed her daughter, bursting into tears.

“Gertrude, what is your meaning—what is your purpose ?” cried her mother, in violent agitation.

Lady Rossville was silent for a few moments. The question was repeated, when, after a struggle to regain her composure, she said—“ This house, and all that I call mine, is yours to command ; but my affections, my liberty, will brook no control. For this day I submit to be a prisoner in my own house—to-morrow I will place myself under the protection of the laws of my country—from these I shall surely meet with justice—let these appoint guardians for me.”——

Mrs St Clair was struck with consternation. She felt the error she had committed, in goading to the utmost a spirit such as her daughter’s ; and there remained but one way to extricate herself from the dilemma she had brought herself into by her violence ; true, that was the old way, but it had hitherto succeeded, and might still answer the purpose better than any other.

“ No, Gertrude,” cried she, “ since it is your wish that we should part, it is for me to seek another

home. Suffer me to remain here for this night, and to-morrow you shall be rid of me for ever. I feel *I* can neither contribute to *your* greatness nor your happiness ; but all that I would lay claim to—peace of mind and respectability—are in your hands. Spare me, at least, the misery and disgrace of being denounced to the world by one for whom I have done and suffered so much !” and Mrs St Clair wept real genuine tears.

But at that moment Mrs St Clair’s maid tapped at the door, to inform her lady that dinner was upon the table ; and, at the same moment, the gong sounded, in confirmation of the intelligence. In an instant all high-wrought feeling was put to flight by this vulgar every-day occurrence.

“ Good Heavens !” exclaimed she, aware that her elaborate toilette required at least an hour to arrange—“ What is to be done ?—How came we to miss the dressing-bell ?—It is impossible for me to appear ; and both to be absent would have a strange appearance. Gertrude, you must join the company ; do make haste.” Then, as her daughter stood irresolute—“ As you love me, obey me now. Let there be mutual forgiveness—mutual

confidence. Away, my love ;” and she kissed her forehead. To avoid farther contention, Gertrude hastened to her apartment to dress, and recover her composure as she best could.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

My soul, sit thou a patient looker on ;
Judge not the play before the play is done ;
Her plot has many changes ; ev'ry day
Speaks a new scene : the last act crowns the play.

QUARLES.

BUT there was no fairy awaiting her there, to dry her tears, and deck her from head to foot by a touch of her wand, but a mere human, though very expert waiting-maid, lost in a maze of conjecture at her lady's non-appearance at this, the most important crisis of the day, in her estimation.

“ I have put out your black crape robe with bugles, my lady,” began the important Miss Masham, “ and your black satin and your pearls, my lady, and your——”

“ Pray, don't teaze me, Masham,” interrupted her lady in a fretful manner, very foreign to her natural one.

“ My lady !” exclaimed the bewildered maid.

“ Desire Jourdain to say that I beg the company may not wait for me—I will join them at the second course—and give me—no matter what ; no, not that odious velvet—never let me see it again.”

“ Crape, to be sure, my lady, is much more suitable now, though satin, you know, my lady, is the most properest *demme schuchong*.” *

The Countess sighed as she threw herself upon a seat, and allowed herself, for the first time, to be dressed according to Miss Masham’s taste.

“ What a frightful head !” was the reward of Masham’s toils, as her lady looked at herself in the glass ; then, smote with the mortification she had inflicted, she added, “ But I believe ’tis because I look so cross—don’t I, Masham ?”

“ Cross ! dear, my lady, that is such an idear ! As if your ladyship could ever be cross !—and your head, my lady, looks charmingly becoming.” But her lady demolished part of Miss Masham’s work before she descended to the dining-room.

Notwithstanding that Miss Pratt had instant-

* *Demi-saison.*

ly voted that Lady Rossville's message should be acted upon, and loudly protested that it would be very ill bred were they not to eat their dinner the same as if she were present, when she had desired it, yet Colonel Delmour as promptly decided otherwise, and ordered the dinner to be taken down stairs again. Then quitting the room, he repaired to the gallery through which he knew the Countess must pass from her own apartment, there to wait her appearance, and lead her to dinner.

The old feud between Pratt and him had lost nothing by absence, and they had met with the same feelings of hostility as they had parted. She had expressed in the loudest manner her astonishment at sight of him—he was the very last person she had dreamt of seeing at Rossville—had figured him still at Gibraltar with his regiment—it was so long since he had been heard of, and sometimes it was “out of sight, out of mind,” &c. &c. &c.

On Colonel Delmour's part, he, in a contemptuous manner, had congratulated Miss Pratt on having accepted an official situation in Lady Rossville's household, which insured her friends

the enjoyment of her company at all times, and at all seasons, however unseasonable.

No sooner was his back turned, than Miss Pratt and uncle Adam began to lay their heads together, for he had already become a new bond of union between them.

“What do you think of this new comer, Mr Ramsay?” whispered she, as she made up to him in the out-of-the-way corner where he usually sat. Uncle Adam, who scorned to whisper, and, indeed, would not have whispered to have saved the Capitol, only replied by an expressive grunt, which was, however, sufficiently encouraging for his friend to proceed.

“What do you think of his taking it upon him to order the dinner down again, after Lady Rossville had sent to desire us to begin? I’m sure I didn’t care a pin-head, for my part, about the matter, but I really thought it vastly impertinent in him of all people to say black or white in this house; for, between ourselves, I can tell you he is no favourite in a certain quarter.”

“I dinna wonder at it, for he’s a proud, upsetting-like puppy.”

“Proud! I only wish, Sir, you had seen as

much of his pride and impertinence as I've done."

"I've just seen enough o't.—Didna I see him boo to me as if he were the Prince o' Wales?"

"That's exactly Anthony Whyte!—my nephew, Mr Whyte of Whyte-Hall! He says he can stand anything but Colonel Delmour's bow, for that he bows to him as if he was his shoemaker—a man that could buy and sell him, and all his generation! As for me, I assure you, I am thankful he gives me none of his civilities."

"What's brought him here?" demanded uncle Adam, gradually winding up to the sticking point.

"Indeed, Sir, that's more than I can tell you, unless it's to try whether he can come better speed with the Countess than he did with the Heiress. But there's little chance of that, or I'm mistaken."

"She has mair sense, I hope."

"That she has!—Not but that I will always think she might have waited and looked about her a little, for, you know, to use an old saying, 'There's as gude fish i' the sea as e'er came

out o't,' and she needn't have been in any hurry."

"I see nae gude that comes o' waiting," said uncle Adam, with a sigh, as he thought how he had waited in vain;—"but I'm at a loss to understand wha ye ca' the fish, for I dinna think she's ta'en up wi' onybody that I've seen."

"My dear Mr Ramsay ! Is that possible ! I really would have given you credit for greater penetration ! Aye ! not to have found out what's been going on all this time,"—and her eyes took the direction where Lyndsay sat reading, or, at least, appearing to read, for his thoughts were otherwise employed.

Uncle Adam shook his head.

"No, Mr Ramsay—you know, if you doubt that, you may doubt anything. Even Lady Betty, honest woman, who seldom sees over her nose, asked me t'other day, if I did not think we were like to have a wedding soon ? In fact, everything, I believe, was pretty much settled before poor Lord Rossville's death—though, whether he would have given his consent, I can't pretend to say—I only speak of what I know for a certainty."

Mr Ramsay still looked incredulous.

“ But what makes you doubt it, Sir?—there’s nothing very unlikely in it. To be sure, as I said before, Edward Lyndsay’s no match for her in point of fortune, you know ; but she has plenty for both, and he’s a genteel, elegant-looking creature ; and though I think his notions, on some things, a great deal too strict, yet I know him to be an honourable fine creature as ever lived, and she’ll change him, depend upon it—she’ll bring him round to her way of thinking, before it’s long.”

“ Weel, weel ; we shall see—time will show,” said Mr Ramsay, still in that unconvinced manner, which is infinitely more provoking than flat contradiction.

“ The old ram-horned goose, that he is,” thought she, “ what can he know about these things ?” Then aloud, “ See !—’pon my word, Mr Ramsay, I think we’ve seen enough to satisfy anybody—and heard too, some of us ; for instance, what would you say, if it had so happened that I was so situated as to be actually obliged to hear (without the slightest intention of listening, but this be-

tween you and me) her give our friend, the Colonel there, his *congé*; and, at the same time, acknowledge herself engaged to Edward Lyndsay?—and that I heard with my own ears.”

Miss Pratt had told this story so often, that it had gradually grown upon her hands, and was firmly impressed upon her own mind, and she now told it with all the force of truth.

Uncle Adam was vanquished. “Ye ken, if ye did that, there need be nae mair said about it. But I wadna hae said that she was in love wi’ him, though I’ll no say but I’ve sometimes thought there might be something on his side for her. Weel, if it is sae, as ye say, she might hae done better, and she might hae done waur. But the warst o’t is, I dinna think there’s muckle love on her side;” and uncle Adam heaved a sigh of fond remembrance.

“I’ll tell you what, Mr Ramsay, love’s a very different thing now-a-days from what it was in our time.—Preserve me! I believe I would have sunk through the ground before I could have gone on as Lady Rossville does. Such a work as she makes with—Cousin Lyndsay this, and

Cousin Lyndsay that !—and what's all this work about visiting the poor and building school-rooms, and such nonsense, but to please him ? and yet she's a sweet, modest-like creature, too, and, for as easy as she is, there's really nothing flirting in her manner neither. But just look at that !" with a jog on the elbow to her ally, as Lady Rossville entered, followed by Colonel Delmour. " Did you ever see such impudence, to be hunting her in that manner ?—Poor soul ! she looks quite fluttered : I really think she has been crying."

Lady Rossville was beginning to apologize for the delay she had occasioned, when dinner was, for the second time, announced. She motioned Lady Betty, as usual, to take the lead, and looked at Colonel Delmour to offer his arm ; but with one of what uncle Adam called his Prince of Wales's bows to Edward Lyndsay, he fell back, and seized the Countess's hand with a look of haughty triumph.

" I hope you observed that manœuvre," whispered Miss Pratt, bending towards uncle Adam, as they stotted along, side by side, but a full

yard asunder—for he would as soon have offered his head as his hand, or even his arm, upon these occasions ;—“ but there’s an old byword, ‘ Fanned fires and forced love ne’er did weel ;’ and some people will maybe not crack quite so crouse by-and-bye.”

Miss Pratt’s ideas were farther confirmed by Lady Rossville’s manner at dinner—for she observed she paid more attention to, and seemed more at her ease with everybody than Colonel Delmour. Uncle Adam likewise remarked this—but he drew a different augury from it, as he called to mind his own shame-facedness when Lizzie Lundie was in question. He marked, too, Edward Lyndsay’s thoughtful, melancholy expression, so different from that of a favoured suitor, and the more striking from being contrasted with his rival’s gay, exulting air.—And as he revolved all these things, his mind misgave him, even in spite of Miss Pratt’s confidential assurances.

“ I could wager you any thing you like, you’re mista’en about yon,” said he, with a shake of his head, to her.

“ Done !” was promptly replied—for, next to a legacy, Miss Pratt liked a wager.—“ What shall it be ?”

“ I could lay you a crown.”

“ A crown !” with contempt ;—“ I’ll take you five guineas.”

“ Five guineas !—that’s a wager indeed !—Weel, I dinna care though I do—‘ a’s no tint that’s in hazard.’ ” And uncle Adam and Miss Pratt touched thumbs upon it.

“ I’m very curious to know what you and my uncle are laying, not only your heads, but your hands, together about ?” said the Countess, with a smile, to Miss Pratt.

Mr Ramsay blushed up to the eyes at having been so detected—but Miss Pratt, nowise abashed, answered, with a significant look—

“ Your Ladyship has, perhaps, a better right to know than anybody else—but there’s a good time coming—all’s well that ends well.”

“ Even when a gentleman gives his left hand to a lady ?” said Colonel Delmour.—“ I thought even Miss Pratt would scarcely have ventured on such a contract.”

“ They say ill-doers are ill-dreaders, Colonel,” retorted his antagonist ;—“ and, for my part, I would prefer an honest man’s left hand to a ne’er-do-weel’s right any day of all the year.—‘ There’s my thumb, I’ll ne’er beguile you,’ was a favourite song in our day, Sir,” to uncle Adam, “ though it’s maybe little—too little in vogue now—but we have not forgot it.”

This was a random shot of Miss Pratt’s—but it had the effect of raising Colonel Delmour’s colour as well as his anger, though he prudently suppressed the latter for the present, and dexterously managed to give the conversation a turn to Scottish songs, and from thence, by an easy transition, to Italian music and poetry, which gave him an opportunity of uttering and insinuating many a tender sentiment, and, at the same time, put him completely beyond the reach of his enemy, who had the command of no tongue but her own.

When the dessert was put upon the table, the usual bustle announced the entrance of Mrs St Clair—for an extraordinary eclat now attended all that lady’s movements, as she entered a room

somewhat in the manner of a Tragedy Queen coming upon the stage. And as she was really a fine-looking woman, dressed highly, and had a good portly air, the effect was very successful.—She really looked—what she evidently intended to represent—the Dowager Countess.

Colonel Delmour rose and advanced to meet her with an air of *empressement* he was far from feeling ; but the hand he held out to her was not accepted, and a distant inclination of the head was the only acknowledgment vouchsafed, as she moved on to the seat he had vacated by Lady Rossville, and took possession of it.

“ I presume I interfere with no one’s rights in taking this chair, which, to me, possesses the double attraction of being next my daughter and nearest the fire.”

Lady Rossville blushed at this open display of her mother’s hostility. Colonel Delmour bit his lip to repress the scornful retort which was ready to burst forth. Miss Pratt hemmed, and gave uncle Adam a jog on the elbow.

“ You look fatigued, love,” addressing her daughter in a fondling manner ; “ you have done

too much to-day—why, you must have been out at least three hours this morning—Mr Lyndsay, I shall scarcely trust my daughter with you again. I hope you ate something—Lady Betty, I hope you made a point of Gertrude taking something good? Now, come, let me dress a little pine for you in the way you used to like it abroad,” and taking off her gloves, and displaying her large, round, white arms, all glittering in rings and bracelets, she began to cut up a pine-apple, and show her skill in this refined branch of elegant cookery.

Lady Rossville felt this display of her mother’s affection was merely with a view to deceive others as to the footing they were upon; she could, therefore, only sit in silent endurance of it, and Mrs St Clair continued to overwhelm her with endearing epithets and tormenting assiduities, which she could neither repel nor return. The party was too small to admit of *tête-à-têtes*, and too dissimilar in all its parts to carry on anything of general conversation, and the Countess, weary of the irksome and idle verbiage of the dinner-table, rose early and retired to the drawing-room.

“Take you care of these two,” whispered Miss

Pratt to uncle Adam, as she was leaving the room, "for I see a certain person's ready to fight with the wind."

No sooner had the ladies left the room, than Colonel Delmour, going to the already blazing fire, began to stir it so violently, that it roared, and crackled, and burned, till uncle Adam felt as though he should be roasted alive, sitting in his own seat. But Colonel Delmour, uttering an ejaculation about cold, rang the bell, and ordered some mulled claret, well spiced, to be got ready immediately, then placing himself before the fire, he stood there humming an opera air, and occasionally exciting the troublesome gambols of a large French poodle, to whom he addressed a few words in its native tongue.

"It will no be possible to live in a hooss wi' that puppy," thought uncle Adam; and he began to meditate his retreat the following day; but then, as the thoughts of Guy Mannering came over him, he staggered in his resolution: leave it he could not—to borrow it he would have been ashamed—to abstract it never entered into his primitive imagination; for, in his day, it had not been

the fashion for ladies and gentlemen to take other people's books, or to lose other people's books, or, in short, to do any of the free and easy things that are the privilege of the present age. True, there were libraries in Barnford; but to have recourse to a circulating-library!—to have it through the town that he was a *novelle* reader!—there was distraction in the thought! Perish Duple and Dandie Dinmont, Dominic Sampson, and the whole host of them, before he would stoop to such a measure! But, then, not to see the end of that scoundrel Glossin, whom he could have hanged with his own hands, only that hanging was too good for him—aye, there's the rub! To be sure, he might skip to the end; but he never had skipped in his life, and had such a thorough contempt for skippers, that he would rather have “burst in ignorance,” than have submitted to so degrading a mode of being relieved. At one time, during dinner, he had thoughts of sounding Miss Pratt as to the result, but his courage failed him—it was hazarding too much with a woman; now he revolved whether he might not, by going about the bush with Mr Lyndsay, extract the

catastrophe from him—but then, he never had gone about the bush all his life, and he was rather at a loss how to set about it now. Before he could make up his mind, therefore, the time came for adjourning to the drawing-room ; but, instead of repairing there, uncle Adam stole away to his own apartment, to try whether another chapter would not set the matter at rest.

CHAPTER XXXV.

But, all in vain, I bolt my sentences.

EURIPIDES.

Mrs ST CLAIR's generalship was exerted so successfully throughout the evening, that, without any apparent design, the lovers were effectually precluded from exchanging words with each other, except in the way of common conversation. But this could not always continue; she felt she had committed herself with her daughter, and must now either act with decision and authority, or give up the attempt altogether. The first would be a dangerous experiment with one of the Countess's high spirit, and the other was too galling an alternative to be voluntarily embraced. Sooner or later she saw it must end in guardians

being appointed for her daughter, and she, therefore, determined to put the best face she could upon it, and be the first to propose the measure herself; not without hopes that, while she thus appeared to throw up the reins, she might at the same time be enabled the more effectually to strengthen her own hands. When the party broke up for the night, she took Lady Rossville's arm and led her to her own dressing-room, when, dismissing her attendant, she thus began:—"Gertrude, as this is perhaps the last time I may have an opportunity of addressing you under your own roof——"

"Oh, mama!" exclaimed the Countess, seizing her mother's hand, "do not, I beseech you, do not recur to what has passed on that subject! This house is yours—you must not leave it—I will not leave you——"

"Gertrude, be calm, and hear me——"

"No, mama, first hear me declare, that all remonstrance will prove unavailing—that no earthly consideration ever can change my resolution—I will not renounce my own free choice."

Lady Rossville spoke slowly, and she pronoun-

ced the last words in a manner which showed that opposition would indeed be vain.

“ My object is not to contend with you, Gertrude,” said her mother, with a sigh ; “ for I am fully aware how little influence I now possess over you ; but my wish is to see you placed under the protection and guardianship of those, who, if they want a mother’s love, may soon possess more than a mother’s influence.—Say who it is that you would choose for your guardian.”

“ I choose you, mama, for one, and my cousin Lyndsay for another—if a third is necessary, do you and he appoint whom you please.”

Mrs St Clair was thunderstruck at the promptitude and decision of this answer, and she could only repeat in a tone of amazement—

“ Mr Lyndsay your guardian ! What an idea ! ”

“ Surely there is nothing wrong in it, mama ? —and who else could I name ? ”

“ It certainly is not customary to choose so very young a man for such an office.”

“ But Mr Lyndsay knows how I am situated—I consider myself as having been repeatedly obliged to him beyond the possibility of my ever repaying him, and although on one point we cer-

tainly differ,"—Gertrude blushed as she spoke; "yet that does not prevent my doing justice to his general character. I respect and esteem him as my friend—as the person who has twice saved me from insult, once from destruction; and I would fain prove to him, in perhaps the only way I may ever have in my power, the reliance I have on him, by placing myself under his control. After the scenes he has witnessed, I owe it to myself to make Edward Lyndsay my guardian."

Mrs St Clair was silent for some time, while, in her own mind, she balanced the *pros* and *cons* of this measure. In the first place, she disliked the thought of having to deal with a person of Edward Lyndsay's acute understanding, unbending principle, and high standard of rectitude—one who, besides, already knew too much of her private concerns, and, consequently, could not be impressed with a very favourable idea of her character. But, to balance these draw-backs, he was evidently no friend to Colonel Delmour, and she thought she might safely calculate on his assistance to further any scheme to preserve Gertrude from becoming the dupe of his artifices. She was aware that he took more than a common

interest in her daughter, and she had no doubt but she would so manage, as by that means to gain an ascendancy over him, while she had little fear that he would ever succeed in supplanting his rival; she would be on her guard against that, and, at any rate, it was worth running all risks to detach her from her present entanglement. Still, even in this view, it was a bitter pill to swallow, and she remained thoughtful and disconcerted. At last she said, "You talk of repaying your obligations to Lyndsay, as though it were a benefit you were about to confer on him, by choosing him for your guardian. Are you aware that it is an office attended with much trouble and responsibility, and that you will only be adding to the weight of that mighty debt you have already incurred?"

"My cousin, I know, will not consider it in that light; and, even if he should, I would rather be indebted to him than any one else."

"Yet there are others on whom you have at least equal claims, and whom the world might think rather more suitable guardians for you."

"I do not know to whom you allude, mama."

“ It is not for me to point them out to you,” said Mrs St Clair, with affected dignity.

“ If you mean my uncle Adam, he is out of the question ; he is so odd——”

“ I do not mean *my* uncle,” interrupted her mother ; “ you have still nearer relatives.”

Lady Rossville coloured at the thoughts of Mr Alexander Black ;—there was a good-humoured vulgar familiarity about him she could scarcely brook, and to subject herself to it was more than her proud spirit could submit to. She made no reply.

“ There is also another person, whom I have less scruple in naming to you ; and either, or both of those, I believe, the world in general would deem perfectly unexceptionable in point of station, connection, character, experience, property—in short, all the essentials for such a trust—neither of them certainly are Werters or St Preux, but they are both what I think fitter for the purpose—they are both men of unblemished character, respectable understandings, mature age, and good, if not great families ; but to one or both of these add, if you choose, any third party, such as Lord Millbank, Sir Peter Wellwood, Lord Fair-

acre, all of them you have seen and know something of, and one of them joined either with Mr Black or Major Waddell——”

“ Major Waddell !” exclaimed the Countess ; “ surely, mama, you are not serious ? Major Waddell my guardian ! No, that is too, really too degrading.”

“ You assume a vast deal too much with your new dignities,” said Mrs St Clair warmly, “ when you presume to talk in that strain of a man born and bred a gentleman, and connected, too, with the first families in the county. The time may come when you may know what degradation is, and, much as you despise my family, you may yet——But no more of this folly ; I have named to you no less than five individuals, each and all of whom I consider perfectly unexceptionable in every respect.”

“ Well, then, if I must be so guarded, let Mr Lyndsay and you raise a whole regiment of guards if you will—with the exception of Major Waddell——every thing else I leave to you and my cousin”——Lady Rossville laid particular emphasis on the word cousin——“ and now, mama, pray dismiss me—I am dying of sleep.”

“ And I of care,” said her mother, with a deep sigh.

“ Do not say so, mama ; be assured we shall both be happy in our own way ;” and kissing her, Gertrude withdrew to her own apartment.

Unwilling as she was to yield, Mrs St Clair felt that she had no alternative. Sometimes she thought of leaving Rossville, and taking her daughter along with her. But where could they go that Colonel Delmour would not follow ? and by adopting violent measures, she found she would only drive the Countess to extremities—perhaps accelerate the very evils she was most anxious to avoid. In short, after a night of restless deliberation, the mortifying conclusion she arrived at was, that, in this instance, she must submit to her daughter’s decision, and adopt the plan she had declared herself determined to pursue. It was particularly disagreeable to her, too, on account of the footing she was upon with Mr Lyndsay.—She still stood pledged to him for an explanation of the mysteries he had witnessed, but that pledge she had no wish nor intention to redeem. The time was past—she had nothing to fear from him, and she felt averse to recur to

a subject which she wished to be for ever consigned to oblivion.

In spite of all this, however, the thing must be done ; and it would be much better done were she to come boldly forward as if of her own free-will, than if she waited till she was compelled to do so in compliance with her daughter's wish. The following morning, therefore, she sent, at an early hour, to desire Lady Rossville to attend her in her dressing-room ; and Gertrude was surprised, upon obeying the summons, to find her mother already up and dressed, as, ever since Lord Rossville's death, she had indulged in late hours, and secluded herself in her own apartment during the greater part of the day.

“ I wish to know, Gertrude,” said she, in a solemn manner, “ whether you still retain the same sentiments that you professed last night—is it still your determination to throw off the parental yoke, to publish your distrust of your mother ?”

“ It is still my determination,” answered the Countess, gravely, “ to obey my mother in all things compatible with what is due to myself ; and I proclaim my sentiments to the world when

I voluntarily make choice of her as my guardian. The other must be Edward Lyndsay." Lady Rossville spoke even more firmly than she had done the preceding night; and Mrs St Clair found that all attempts to turn her from this resolution would prove abortive.

"Be it so, then!" cried she;—"anything must be better than this state of things. Give me your arm. I mean to breakfast below to-day," and they descended together to the breakfast-room, where only uncle Adam and Miss Pratt had just appeared. These two worthies were in the heat of a colloquy, but on the entrance of the ladies, it suddenly ceased in a very abrupt and suspicious manner, and uncle Adam shuffled away to the window with ears pendent, while Miss Pratt, who at first was quite thrown on her beam-ends, began to rally her forces.

The mystery was simply the last night's wager, renewed, not without hopes on Pratt's side of persuading uncle Adam to knock under at once upon the voluminous mass of evidence she was pouring out upon him, and which she flattered herself would finally terminate in her fingering the five guineas, as she already looked upon them

as her own, and felt somewhat impatient at being kept out of her lawful property. They had, however, all the air of detected lovers, and Mrs St Clair's antipathy against Miss Pratt was trebled tenfold, as the idea flashed upon her, that she was endeavouring to inveigle uncle Adam and his seventy thousand pounds into an alliance, offensive in the highest degree. However their loves were a secondary consideration at present, and she allowed them to pass unnoticed in the virtuous intention of crushing them effectually at some future period.

Breakfast passed very heavily. There was an evident constraint on all present; for even Miss Pratt was more intent on watching the progress of her wager, than in dispensing the usual flow of chit-chat. Mrs St Clair maintained the same haughty reserve towards Colonel Delmour, which he either was, or affected to appear quite unconscious of, and directed his looks and attentions solely to Lady Rossville. But Miss Pratt's abstraction seldom lasted long, and as she chanced to cast her eye on Lyndsay, she suddenly exclaimed, " Bless my heart, my dear ! what makes you look so ill to-day ?"

“ I was not aware that I was looking particularly ugly this morning,” answered he.

“ Ugly, my dear ! that’s a very strong word ; as Anthony Whyte says, it’s one thing to look ill, and another thing to look ugly, and that there’s many a one it would be paying too high a compliment to, to tell them they were looking ill, for that would imply that they sometimes looked well—so you see you ought to be much flattered by my telling you that you are looking ill. Don’t you think so, Lady Rossville ?”

“ I suspect Mr Lyndsay is not easily flattered,” answered she—“ I was trying my powers with him in that way yesterday, but I cannot flatter myself I was successful.”

“ A fair acknowledgment that you were only flattering me all the while,” said he, forcing a smile ; “ I half suspected as much and, therefore, to punish you for your insincerity, I shall certainly remain where I am for this day, at least.”

“ I suspect that will prove rather an encouragement than a corrective of the vice,” said Mrs St Clair gaily ; “ and lest Mr Lyndsay should next mistake the matter, so far as to think of re-

warding our plain-dealing by running away from us, I engage him to attend me now to the library."

Mr Lyndsay bowed his acquiescence, not without some surprise, and, as he rose, Mrs St Clair put her arm within his, and was leaving the room, when, as if recollecting something, she called her daughter to her, and contrived to converse her out of the room, and to lead her through the suite of apartments till they came to that adjoining the library.

"Wait here, my love, for a few minutes," said she; "I would first speak with Mr Lyndsay alone, but it will be necessary you should join us immediately."

Lady Rossville felt as if she had only been taken there to be away from Colonel Delmour, and she almost smiled in derision at her mother's petty stratagems.

"Now!" cried Miss Pratt in an exulting tone to uncle Adam, as the party left the room.

"Weel—what noo?" demanded he in an undaunted tone.

"That's really speaking out," continued she, pointing after them, and, at the same time, cast-

ing a glance at Colonel Delmour, who had hitherto sat in a sort of bitter scornful silence, but, on finding himself left at table with such a group as uncle Adam, Lady Betty, and Miss Pratt, he had immediately risen, and, after carelessly tossing some fragments of the breakfast to his dog, and whistling a French air to him, he sauntered away with his usual air of high-bred nonchalance.

“Sour grapes,” whispered Miss Pratt to uncle Adam.

“I’m no very sure about that,” was the reply, as he prepared to creep away to his turret to Lizzie Lundie and Meg Merrilees.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

For my part, I think there is nothing so secret that shall not be brought to light within the world.

BURNET.

MRS ST CLAIR'S nerves almost failed her when she found herself alone with Lyndsay, for the first time since their meeting in the wood ; but then the reflection, that the secret connected with that scene was for ever buried in the deep, (or what was still deeper, her own heart,) recalled her self-possession, and, without betraying any fear or hesitation, she began—

“ It must doubtless appear extraordinary to you, that I should have allowed so much time to elapse without giving you the *eclaircissement*, which you must naturally have expected.”

“ Which I was promised,” said Lyndsay emphatically.

“ True, you were so ; but my own illness, the

subsequent events which have taken place in the family, rendered the performance of such a promise, for a time, impracticable ; since then it has become unnecessary. The person who was the cause of so much needless alarm to my daughter and myself is no more, he has perished at sea—you must have observed in a late newspaper, the detail of the shipwreck, and probably drew from it the same conclusion, that the wrong-headed infatuated man, who had caused us so much annoyance, had met his fate.”

“ Yes, so far I did conjecture ; but the circumstances which seemed to have placed Lady Rosville and you so completely in the power of such a man—you surely do not mean to leave these to conjecture ?”

“ It is certainly not every one on whose candour, and liberality, and charity, I could place such reliance, as to leave a shadow of doubt on their minds, which it was in my power to clear away ; but when I balance, on the one hand, the painful task I should have to perform in recurring to past events—in disturbing the ashes of the departed—in harrowing up my own feelings, by recalling the unmerited obloquy, the poverty,

and privations, my unfortunate husband was doomed to endure, in consequence of his ill-fated attachment to me—can I—ought mine to be the hand to tear aside the veil in which his errors are now for ever shrouded? On the other, what have I to dread from a nature so honourable and candid as yours—one which I believe to be as incapable of suspecting evil as of committing it?”

“ I fear you give me credit for an extent of virtue I do not possess,” said Lyndsay gravely ; “ for I must freely confess that I have received impressions of so unfavourable a nature, that I find all my charity quite insufficient to dispel them. Surely, then, justice is due to the living as well as tenderness to the dead.”

“ You say true, and rather than that my daughter should suffer in your estimation,”——Mrs St Clair stopped and sighed.—“ Yet I flattered myself, that, with the thousand opportunities I have lately afforded you of gaining a thorough insight into her character, and of witnessing the almost childish openness of her disposition, you would, ere now, have been enabled, from your own knowledge of her, (an infinitely surer criterion than a mother’s commendation,) to have acquitted her

of all culpability in this unfortunate occurrence, ambiguous as it may appear."

"My suspicions do not, in the least degree, attach to Lady Rossville," cried Lyndsay warmly; "I could stake my life on the purity of her mind and conduct—but ——"

"But you distrust me.—Well, be it so; since my daughter does not suffer I am satisfied. Let mine be the obloquy—only let me screen from reproach the memory of a husband."

"I am little used to disguise my sentiments," said Lyndsay;—"and the present occasion, I think, warrants my expressing them very plainly. You must excuse me then, when I say, that I can scarcely conceive any motive so powerful as to induce a mother to endanger her own and her daughter's reputation. I have twice seen Lady Rossville insulted—had I possessed the power, she should certainly have been under other protection before now."

Mrs St Clair coloured deeply, and struggled for some moments to retain her composure—but she succeeded, and resumed—

"I was aware that such must be your opinion—and, mortifying as it is, I shall make no at-

tempt to change it at present. Hereafter, perhaps, you may do me greater justice ; in the meantime, it is my determination to resign the guardianship of my daughter into other hands. It is my wish, and that of Lady Rossville, that Mr Lyndsay would accept this trust—the strongest proof we can either of us give of our own self-respect, as well as our confidence and esteem for him.”

Mr Lyndsay’s emotion at this proposal did not escape Mrs St Clair’s piercing observation, and she secretly hoped he might decline the proposal—but, after a few minutes consideration, he said—

“ I accept of the trust, and hope I may be enabled to discharge it faithfully—but I cannot take the whole responsibility of such an office ; there must be other guardians appointed.”

“ My daughter insists upon my acting also in that capacity, although it was my wish to have delegated the office entirely to others—to my brother, for instance, or my nephew, Major Waddell, or any other of the county gentlemen she would name—but she is immovable on that point—so we have only to consider hereafter

who it will be proper to make choice of. Meanwhile, allow me to consider you as the actual guardian of my daughter, and as such, anxious to co-operate with me in all that is for her advantage ;” and Mrs St Clair went over pretty much the same ground she had done before, in painting the anticipated miseries of her union with Colonel Delmour—aggravated, too, by his late evasive conduct—the whole concluding with, “ Had his absence been prolonged but for a few months, this childish fancy would have passed away—a more rational and more enduring attachment would have taken its place. Already, I sometimes flattered myself, the work was begun ;”—and she sighed as she fixed her eyes on Lyndsay, whose changing expression and varying colour spoke the feelings he would not for worlds have uttered.—“ And now what is to be done ? Separated they must be, and that without delay, for while they are suffered to remain together, his influence will prevail over every other.—Already his ascendancy is obvious—every day, every hour, spent together will only serve to strengthen it.—My authority singly will be of no

avail to counteract it—but you possess weight and influence with Gertrude——”

“ Which I have neither the right nor the inclination to use at present. Rashness and violence can serve no purpose but to increase opposition. Rely upon Lady Rossville’s promise not to marry”—and Lyndsay’s voice faltered a little as he said it—“till she is of age. In the meantime, treat her with openness and confidence; these will prove firmer holds than bolts or bars with a nature such as hers—suffer her mind to expand, and her judgment to mature—suffer the slow but gradual process of mental elucidation to go on—let her see others perhaps as gifted as Colonel Delmour, and leave her free to form her own opinions, and draw her own conclusions—perhaps, when she knows him better, she will learn to value him less—but any attempt to force a mind such as hers against its own bent will never succeed. You may gall and fret her temper, but you will not change, or at least improve her nature, and I never will consent to any measures of the kind.”

This was very contrary to what Mrs St Clair had anticipated. She had flattered herself that

he would have caught eagerly at the bait thrown out, and would have been ready to assist her in any scheme she might have suggested for the separation of the lovers. But Lyndsay's mind was much too noble and generous to allow any selfish considerations for a moment to sway him, even where the temptation was most powerful. He had no base passions to gratify, neither envy, nor jealousy, nor revenge, and, consequently, his decisions were always just and upright. But it was far otherwise with Mrs St Clair, and she was provoked and disappointed at having failed to stimulate him to co-operate with her in the violent measures she had projected. She was aware, however, that it would be in vain to oppose the Countess and him together, and she was, therefore, obliged to yield an unwilling assent for the present.

Lady Rossville was now summoned to the conference, and the result was, that Lord Millbank and Mr Alexander Black should be requested to accept the office of joint guardians along with Mrs St Clair and Mr Lyndsay.

“As there are now no secrets amongst us,

Gertrude," said her mother, in her most ostentatious manner, waving her hand to Mr Lyndsay ; " I may inform you, that it has been agreed upon by Mr Lyndsay and myself, that Colonel Delmour shall be permitted to remain here for the present, on the footing of any other guest—such is the confidence we both place in your good sense and propriety."

Lady Rossville blushed to the forehead at this extraordinary address, and both Lyndsay and she turned away their eyes from each other.

" It would be a strange assumption of brief authority in me," said he, " were I to presume to interfere with Lady Rossville in the choice of her guests ;" and with a slight inclination of the head, he quitted the room.

" What a load has been taken from my mind by this arrangement ;" said Mrs St Clair, with a sigh, which rather belied her words ; " and now, Gertrude, love, will you order the carriage, or shall I ? We must pay some visits—in particular, we must go to my brother's. Mr Lyndsay has promised to ride to Lord Millbank's this morning, and settle matters with him. He is a stupid

man, but it seems he is a relation of yours, and understands business, so he may do very well. As for your uncle, 'tis proper you should see him yourself. I don't think you have been at Bellevue since Lord Rossville's death?"

"But this morning is so delightful, it would be a sin to waste it on a dull drive to Bellevue; a much worse one might serve equally well for that purpose, and there are a thousand things I have to do to-day—I must see what progress has been made with my rustic bridge—whether the terrace-walk has yet been begun—how speeds my bower—if my flower knots are arranging according to rule—apropos, mama, what a lack of shrubs and flowers are here! I must have quantities immediately—not a day must be lost. I must have clouds of dropping roses to meet this 'ethereal mildness,' and do all honour to this gentlest of gentle springs."

"Don't be a fool, Gertrude; or, at least, remember there is a time for all things—even for folly. The present belongs to more important subjects than building baby-houses, and dressing dolls."

“ Well, mama, pray manage them as you will, but leave me at liberty to have a walk to-day.”

“ And who, pray, is to be your escort in this important survey ?”

Lady Rossville blushed and hesitated, then, in a faint voice, said, “ Anybody, mama.”

“ But Lady Rossville is not to ramble all over the country with anybody or everybody,” said her mother sarcastically ; “ I will have no clandestine meetings, remember.”

“ Clandestine !” repeated the Countess, “ no ; with my own guests and relations, why should I have recourse to clandestine measures ? My intention was to walk with Colonel Delmour ; but since it is your desire that I should accompany you, I will do so ;” and she rose to ring the bell and order the carriage, when the movement was arrested by hearing the sound of wheels crisping the gravel, as they rolled slowly round to the grand entrance. “ Ah ! there are my aunts !” exclaimed Lady Rossville. “ I wrote yesterday to invite them, but I scarcely looked for them so soon. I must fly to welcome them ;” and in an instant she was on the outer steps of the entrance, ready to assist her aunt Mary herself.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

These Indian wives are loving fools, and may do well to keep company with the Arrias and Portias of old Rome.

DRYDEN.

BUT the carriage door being opened, there stepped out Major Waddell, having upon his back a vast military cloak, with all its various appliances of tags, and jags, and flags, and waving capes, and scarlet linings, and shining brooch, &c. &c. &c. The Major having placed himself on one side of the carriage door, black Cæsar, in no less gorgeous array, stationed himself at the other, and then, after a little feminine delay, there came forth Mrs Major Waddell in all her bravery. A rich and voluminous satin mantle enveloped her person ; a rare and costly lace veil streamed like a meteor to the wind ; muff, bonnet, feathers, boots, reticule—all were in perfect keeping ; and Mrs Major Waddell, from the crown of the head to the

sole of the foot, might have stood for the frontispiece of *La Belle Assemblée*.

Placing a hand upon each of her supporters, she descended the steps of the carriage with much deliberate dignity, and then, as if oppressed with the weight of her own magnificence, she gave her muff to Cæsar, while the Major gallantly seized her reticule, and assisted her to ascend the flight of steps, where stood the Countess, provoked at herself for her precipitation in having so unwarily rushed out to receive this unexpected importation.

“ Well, cousin, this is really kind !” exclaimed Mrs Major ; “ but you see what it is to be without a lord and master. Here is mine would be in perfect agonies if I were to stand for a single moment outside the door without my bonnet.”

“ You ought to tell Lady Rossville, at the same time, who it was tied two double neckcloths round my throat yesterday, when——”

But Lady Rossville could not listen to the Major’s playful recrimination, and she interrupted him by saying, with a somewhat stately air,—

“ I imagined it was my aunt Mary who had arrived, and, knowing how helpless she is, I hast-

ened out to see that she was properly attended to.—
But my friends are all welcome,” added she, with
her usual sweetness of manner, and she led the
way to the saloon.

Mrs Waddell was a prize to Lady Betty and
Miss Pratt, who were both fond of seeing fine-
dressed people ; and Mrs Waddell had so much
to look at, and her things were all so new, and
so rich, and so fashionable ; and India muslin,
and India shawls, and India chains, and lace,
and trinkets, were heaped upon her with such an
unsparing hand, that it was quite a feast to sit
and scan each article individually. Miss Pratt
even went farther, and anticipated, at the least,
half a piece of sprigged India muslin to herself,
the same as Mrs Waddell’s gown, which she
forthwith began to admire with all her might.
Moreover, she intended to ingratiate herself so
far as to obtain a footing in the house, for, as she
reasoned with herself, there was nobody knew
good-living better than your nabobs ; they were
commonly squeamish and bilious, and needed
a nice bit ; and, at any rate, one might de-
pend upon genuine Mullagatawney and Madeira
at their tables, and, to a used stomach, these

were great restoratives, for a fortnight or so, now and then. Miss Pratt, thereupon, began to do the honours with even more than her usual activity. She made a point of taking off Mrs Waddell's mantle with her own hands, commenting upon its beauty as she did so ; she insisted upon her using a footstool, and having two additional squab-cushions to lean upon, and pressed a cup of chocolate, in a manner not to be withstood. She was obliged to give back a little, however, when Mrs St Clair came sweeping in with her usual authoritative air, and welcomed her relations with a patronizing grandeur of deportment, that sunk Miss Pratt's nimble civilities into nothing.

Mrs St Clair was vulgar enough to feel gratified by the appearance made by her niece. Her equipage was handsome—her dress fashionable and expensive—she herself very pretty ; the Major's rank was respectable—his connections were good—and though they were both fools, yet a fool in satin was a very different thing from a fool in sackcloth, and was treated accordingly. She therefore began, “ I observe your carriage has not been put up, Isabella ; surely Major

Waddell and you have not come so far to pay us a mere morning visit? Gertrude, you must endeavour to persuade your cousins ——”

“The best of all persuasions,” said Miss Pratt, “is to order the horses to be put up; that’s a sure argument—is it not, Major? Let me pull the bell, Lady Rossville.”

“Why, to tell you the truth, the Major and I had agreed, before we set out, that if we found you living quietly here, and no company, we would have no objection to spend a day or two with you *en famille*;—but, as I go nowhere at present, it must be upon condition that I remain quite incog.”

Mrs St Clair already repented of her invitation; and Gertrude could only say, “We are quite a family party.”

“In that case then, Major, I think we must remain where we are. You had better speak to Robert yourself about the horses, and tell Cæsar to see that every thing is taken out of the carriage. As we were quite uncertain of remaining, I didn’t think of bringing my own maid with me—and, Major, I think I must have left my *vinai-grette* in one of the pockets of the carriage;

when one travels in their own carriage, they are so apt to litter it, you know, and leave things lying about, that really mine is almost like my dressing-room."

"A very handsome carriage it is," said Miss Pratt, as it wheeled past the windows.

"Very plain—but the Major and I are both partial to every thing plain."

This plainness consisted in a bright blue body, with large scarlet arms, bearing the Black and Waddell quarterings, mantle, crest, cipher, coupéd gules, and all appliances to boot.

"By-the-bye, I hear strange things of my poor uncle," said Mrs Major, when the carriage was out of sight.—"I'm told, cousin, you found him all but dead in his own house, and had him carried away in a fit. The Major and I were from home at the time;—we were on a visit at Lord Fairacre's, and heard nothing of it till two days ago, that we returned, or I should certainly have made a point of seeing after him, poor man.—He is not confined to bed, I hope?—Does he know we are here, I wonder?"

"I shall let him know myself," said Lady Rossville, who instantly conjectured, that if uncle

Adam came unwarily to the knowledge of the Major and lady being under the same roof with himself, stone and lime could scarcely contain him. She, therefore, (glad, at the same time, of an excuse for leaving her company,) hastened to the yellow turret. She tapped several times at the door, but received no answer—she listened, all was silent—she slowly opened the door, no notice was taken—she looked in, and there sat uncle Adam, with spectacles on nose, so intent upon a book, that all his senses seemed to be completely lapt in its pages. Gertrude coughed, but in vain—she spoke, but it was to the walls—she went close up to him, but he saw her not—at length, she ventured to lay her hand on his shoulder, and—Guy Mannering dropt upon the floor.

“ You seem to be much interested in your studies.” said Lady Rossville, as she stooped to pick it up for him.

Mr Ramsay purpled with shame, as he tried to affect a tone of indifference, and said, “ Oo—I—hem—it’s just a wheen idle havers there that I—just——hem—They maun hae little to do, that tak up their heads writing sic nonsense.”

“ I never heard the author accused of idleness

before," said Lady Rossville, with a smile; "and no one need be ashamed to own the interest excited by these wonderful works of genius."

"Interesst—hugh!—Folk may hae other things to interesst them, I think, in this world. I wonder if there's ony o't true? I canna think how ae man could sit down to contrive a' that. I dinna misdoot that scoondrel Glossin at a'. I would gi'e a thoosand pound out o' my pocket to see that rascal hanged, if hanging wasna ower gude for him!"

"Well, you may be at ease on that head, as even worse befalls him," said Lady Rossville.

"Weel, I rejoice at that! for if that scoondrel had gotten leave to keep that property, by my troth, I believe, I would have burnt the book;"—then, ashamed of his ardour in such a cause, he added in a peevish tone—"But it's a' nonsense thegither, and I'm no gaun to fash my head ony mair about it."

Lady Rossville now announced the arrival of the Waddells in the most conciliating manner she could, but in any way it was an event to rouse all uncle Adam's angry feelings, though for some minutes he said nothing, but merely walk-

ed round and round the turret, rubbing his forehead, as if at a loss how to proceed. At last he stopped and said,—

“ I ken weel enough what’s brought them here. That creature, though she is a fule, has the cunning o’ Auld Nick himsel’ ; but you may just tell her frae me, she’ll mak naething o’ me—she shall ne’er see ae bawbee o’ mine ; you may just tell her that.”

Gertrude here attempted a sort of vindication of her cousin from such debasing suspicions ; but she was cut short with,—

“ Weel, if ye winna tell her, I’ll tell her mysel’. I’m no gaun to be hunted up and down, in and out, that I canna turn mysel’, but Maister and Mrs Major Waddell maun be at my heels ;” and he resumed his perambulations, as if to give the lie to his words by his actions.

“ I’m just switherin’,” resumed he, “ whether to quit the hooss this minute, or whether to stay still and see the creators oot o’t ;” then, as his eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, glanced from Lizzie Lundie to Guy Mannering, he added, “ But I’ll no gi’e them the satisfaction o’ thinking they

ha'e driven me awa. I daursay that's just what she wants, so I'll stay still where I am."

This magnanimous resolution formed, Lady Rossville tried to prevail upon him to return to the saloon with her, to meet his relatives, but in vain ; he declared, that till dinner was on the table, he would not stir from where he was, and Lady Rossville, who had too much sense to attempt to combat his prejudices openly, was obliged to leave him, and make the best excuse she could for his non-appearance. No sooner had she left the room, than Mr Ramsay locked and bolted the door, to prevent any farther intrusion, and after a few glances at Lizzie, his ruffled pinnions were smoothed, and he returned with unabated ardour to his studies.

Colonel Delmour and Mr Lyndsay had both joined the party during Gertrude's absence ; and she again felt something like shame as she marked her lover's lofty bearing towards her relations, while the Major seemed to grow ten times sillier, and his lady twenty times more affected in their struggles to keep on par with him. With Lyndsay it was otherwise ; for although his manners were not less elegant, yet as they emanated

from better feelings, so they never oppressed others with the painful consciousness of their own inferiority ; and even the Major and lady in his company might have become something better, had not his benign influence been counteracted by the haughty port and humiliating condescension of the other. But his horses had been some time announced, and he set out upon his ride to Millbank House.

“ Do you know, I begin to think Mr Lyndsay really quite handsome, and his manners extremely pleasing,” said Mrs Major, with an air as though her approbation set the seal to him at once.

“ He sits his horse remarkably well,” said the Major ; “ I wonder whether he ever was in the dragoons ?”

“ Do you walk to-day, Lady Rossville ?” demanded Colonel Delmour abruptly.

As the expedition to Bellevue was now given up, Gertrude answered in the affirmative, and invited Mrs Waddell to be of the party.

“ O, you must first get my lord and master’s leave for that. Major, what would you think of my taking a walk to-day ?” looking very archly to the rest of the company.

The Major looked distressed.

“Why, you know, Isabella, the very last time you walked was to see Lord Fairacre’s new pinery, and you certainly caught cold, for you may remember Lady Fairacre remarked, next morning, how heavy your eyes were, and I think you look a little pale to-day, my love.”

“There now ! I knew how it would be. You see how completely I am under orders : However, I beg not to prevent you from indulging your taste in a rural stroll—with your beau,” added she, in a whisper, to Lady Rossville, who, ashamed at being wearied of such intolerable folly, rose and went to prepare for a walk, at the same time, in a general way, inviting such of the party as chose to accompany her.

On returning, she found the party was to consist of herself and the two gentlemen. Lady Betty and Mrs St Clair (like Mrs Waddell) never walked when they could help it, and Miss Pratt had attached herself so assiduously to the nabobess, and had so much to tell and to say, that, contrary to her usual practice, she was a fixture for the day.

“Major Waddell,” cried Mrs St Clair, in her

most authoritative manner, as they were leaving the room, “remember I commit Lady Rossville solely to your care—Gertrude, you will be at pains to point out to Major Waddell the beauties of Rossville, and get his opinion of the improvements you have begun.”

“You see what you have brought upon yourself, Major, by your care of me,” cried his lady, not much delighted with this arrangement, which she thought was rather interfering with her privileges.

Lady Rossville and Colonel Delmour were too much annoyed at this appendage to say anything; the latter, indeed, was revolving in his own mind how to dismiss him the moment they were out of sight, and the Countess was hesitating whether she should do more than merely take a single turn before the house under such guardianship, when, as they crossed the hall, Mrs Waddell's voice was heard loudly calling the Major back, and the lady herself presently appeared in great agitation.

“Now, Major, is it possible you were really going out without your cloak, when you know very

well you was so hoarse this morning that I could scarcely hear what you said ?”

“ Well, for Heaven’s sake, compose yourself, my dear girl,” said the Major, in a whisper.

“ Now, Major, that is impossible, unless you put on your cloak.”

“ But, I assure you, I am much more likely to catch cold with my cloak than without it. Why, this is almost like a day in Bengal. I do assure you my cloak would be quite overcoming.”

“ Now, Major——”

“ Well, well, my dear, don’t say any more. Do, I beseech you, compose yourself ;—but this cloak is so confoundedly heavy—do just feel it.”

“ Now, Major——”

“ Well, no matter, my dear ; anything to make you easy ;” and the poor Major buckled on his apparatus, while the lady set up the collar, clasped the brooch, and drew the voluminous folds close round his person, already bursting at every pore.

“ Now, Major, be sure you keep it close round you, and, for any sake, don’t open your collar—Do you promise ?”

“ But, my dear Bell ——”

“ Well, Major, I can only say——”

“ Well, well,” gasped the poor Major, “ that is enough.”

“ There now, I feel quite comfortable,” said the lady, as she completed her operations.

“ It is more than I do,” thought the Major, as he slowly sallied forth, and caught a glimpse of Lady Rossville and Colonel Delmour, who had taken advantage of this conjugal delay to make their escape. “ So my companions have got the start of me ;” and he footed away as fast as his short legs and ponderous cloak permitted. But, in vain, like panting Time, did he toil after the fugitives, whose light figures and elastic steps mocked his utmost exertions to overtake them ; and the provoking part of it was, that, while he was puffing, and blowing, and sawing the air with his arms, without ever gaining a single step upon them, they had the appearance of sauntering along quite at their ease, and deaf to his repeated calls.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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